

THE COPTIC ORTHODOX BISHOPRIC
OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS

PRESENTS

THE STORY OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX
CHURCH IN AFRICA

COME ACROSS... AND HELP US

(ACTS 16:9)



BOOK THREE

THE HISTORY OF REVIVING
THE MISSION OF
THE COPTIC ORTHODOX
CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA
FROM 1991-2003

BY
HIS GRACE BISHOP
ANTONIUS MARKOS

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COMPLETED IN
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA
ON THE FEAST OF THE HOLY RESURRECTION
2003

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



HIS HOLINESS POPE SHENOUDA III
SUCCESSOR OF ST MARK
117TH POPE OF ALEXANDRIA
PATRIARCH OF THE SEE OF ST MARK



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

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INTRODUCTION
TO THE STORY OF THE COPTIC CHURCH IN AFRICA
BY
H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

This story begins in the first Christian century.

Saint Mark, the Apostle, established the Church of Alexandria and the Church in Libya, which was the first among the Pentapolis Churches (the five 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 329AD Pope Athanasius, the Apostolic, consecrated the first bishop to serve her. That was Saint 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 Saint Mark.

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

That was in the time of Pope Yousab (Joseph) II, who ordained Anba Morcos, a Metropolitan for South Africa and Nigeria, 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 protopriest, Father Isaac El-Anba Bishoy continued for sometime, then returned to his monastery.

This book, which 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 sometime 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 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 Tigrinya and Amharic in Ethiopia, and Kiswahili in Kenya, with other dialects of some African tribes, besides his efficiency in the English language in which he has given many lectures in America and Australia. He is also distinguished by activity and intelligence, which 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 you 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 centre to the south of the continent.

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

Fare thee well in the Lord.

Pope Shenouda III

August 1993 (The Virgin Mary's Fasting)

PREFACE
BY
HIS GRACE BISHOP ANTONIUS MARKOS
COPTIC ORTHODOX BISHOP OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS

To the Members of the Living Body of our Lord Jesus Christ: Fathers, Brothers, Sons, Mothers, Sisters and Daughters of the Holy Church,

I feel great joy that the book, which is now in your hands, is a fact, as it has been long awaited. It is now more than ten years since the first and second books of "Come Across and Help Us" were published in the early 1990s.

The eagerness of numerous readers, both Arabic and English, was great and many repeatedly questioned: "Where is the rest of the story?"

His Holiness (H.H.) Pope Shenouda III expressed this sentiment in his introduction to books I and II, saying: "No doubt, what you are reading is only part of the story", as he was well aware of the unrelenting continuation of the service in Africa.

No doubt, the story is indeed one of faith and it is ongoing.

Through your prayers, we will elaborate further in more books, if God wills: books 4, 5 and 6.

Truly the great pressure of working in the African continent during the past twenty-seven years, including the establishment and development of the Church in South Africa over the last eleven years, with the accompanying expansion of the Church to three countries in West Africa over the past four years, is an explanation for the delay in producing this book.

Similarly, the warfare of principalities and the rulers of darkness of this age that have resisted our evangelistic service since 1976, and against which we have wrestled, have escalated in the middle of last decade but have never been successful in stopping the progress of God's work in Africa. Instead, the fights and spiritual wars only worked to deepen our experiences, in the presence of the Lord, and we have felt and seen him consistently very near. His unlimited powers invariably surpass man's entire mind.

You will read about:

- ◊ The gift of God, by which the Lord has established His church in Johannesburg and throughout South Africa
- ◊ The Coptic servants in the field of mission for the first time since the seventh century and their attempts to negotiate the cultural boundaries to best assist the evangelistic service amongst Africans
- ◊ The true change of Africans, in depth and spirituality, to authentic orthodoxy
- ◊ The nurturing of African priests and deacons, with firm orthodox roots, through teaching and scholarship, following the steps of Saint Mark who established the first-ever Christian theological school
- ◊ The efforts of the Coptic Orthodox Church to entrench Christian orthodoxy in South Africa and the whole continent, and the eagerness of many to join the first African Church
- ◊ The Coptic Cathedral in Johannesburg, which, being known as the fifth Christian cathedral of this city, has become a renowned landmark of the originality of ancient Christianity in Africa

- ◊ The great planning and execution of the building of the Johannesburg Saint Mark Cathedral, reflecting the depth of spirituality of the Church in the beautiful icons, the towers carrying the Cross, and the domes; it has now become a place that many people seek to visit, spending a time of meditation and quietness, taking time for prayer to attain a spiritual peace
- ◊ A great blessing that has been granted to South Africa through the three visits of H.H. Pope Shenouda III, may the Lord give him long life, praying that he may find the time to visit South Africa for a fourth time to consecrate the Saint Mark Cathedral and inaugurate the Saint Athanasius Theological College
- ◊ The expansion of the Coptic Orthodox Church in West Africa, through divine intervention- higher than man's thoughts
- ◊ The registration of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the tenth African country- Ghana
- ◊ The spread of the mission mind and its place in the hearts of the Copts all over the world

Due to the substantial distance between our churches in Egypt, the lands of immigration and South Africa, it is very important that we should put this work in your hands to enable you to see an image of the wonderful gifts of our Lord who loves His mission and supports it by the spread of the Church throughout all Africa. Facing all that has happened, we feel aware that we are only dust and ashes and through Him everything was made, and without Him nothing could have been made.

We thank the Lord, who has supported us to write this history

and all this, without doubt, is with the encouragement of H.H. Pope Shenouda III, may the Lord give him long life as a father and a shepherd and leader of the Church. He has given us all support and fatherly love towards the mission of the Church, and also encouraged me to teach the "theology of mission" in Arabic and English in the Pastoral Institute and several theological colleges and institutions in Egypt, as well as in the lands of immigration.

I would love to give my sincere thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to all those who have made a great effort to complete this work, including its research, preparation, typing and revision- Mrs Mary Khela, Mr Samer A.N. Rezk, Engineer Labib Farag Hanna, and Ms Sandra Kanard.

Peace and edification to the one holy, universal, apostolic, and orthodox Church. Amen.

Antonius Markos

Through the Grace of God,

General Bishop of African Affairs

The Day of Resurrection of the Lord

27 April 2003

9 Barramoudah 1719 to the Martyrs

Saint Mark Cathedral, Parkview, Johannesburg,

South Africa

Chapter One



THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Establishment in South Africa

**"All things were made through
Him and without Him nothing was
made." John 1:3**

The story of the establishment of the Coptic Orthodox Church in South Africa goes back to 1991-92...

FROM NOTHING CAME EVERYTHING

Considering the human mind and abilities it could be considered impossible that something would come out of nothing but, consistent with the will of God and in accordance with His powers, everything is possible.

As the book of Genesis 1: 2 says, *the earth was without form, and void; and darkness [was] on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.* The presence of His spirit, flying over the place in that time that God has chosen, makes the impossible to become a true fact- we live it, we see it, we confess it, and we can see the Lord through that which we can touch and experience.

We can also speak about how great the Lord has been with us, as in Psalm 126:2,3: *Then our mouth was filled with laughter; And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us, [And] we are glad.*

THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

The Lord, in Exodus 3:12 said: *"I will certainly be with you.* When the Lord puts on the weak, a great responsibility and an historical mission that is important for the life of humankind, He is assuring man that His promises are true and His works are honest, while He is near the weak man at all times and in all places. He walks with him systematically, supplying him with courage, determination, continuity, endurance and fortitude. Likewise, He gives him the abilities to complete the holy ministry.

The Lord gives a great mission that is particularly important to the life of humankind, especially to the life of His disciples and His apostles. He assured them of two important facts:

1. Acts 1:4: *He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, until they receive power from above.* Luke 24:49: *"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."* These verses speak of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit and His march with them continuously.
2. ... *lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age."* Matthew 28:20 The Lord is forever present and nearby to them.

THE LORD DECLARES HIS WILL IN REVIVAL OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX MISSION SERVICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

It was in the celebration of the Church, during the Feast of the Pentecost in June 1991, that I took the blessings of meetings with H.H. Pope Shenouda III at the papal residence in Anba Ruweiss. While H.H. asked to speak with me about many things concerning the service in four African countries in which many churches had been established- Kenya, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Namibia-, he further questioned me: "Isn't the time now ripe to start the service in South Africa?" That was really the desire of my heart.

H.H. then asked if I had visited South Africa before, and what we should do about establishment of a South African mission service. He also inquired whether we had any information on the diocese, which an effort had been made to establish under the auspices of H.H. Pope Yousab II, 115th Pope of Alexandria, around 1950.

I reminded him that I had been invited by the professors of the University of South Africa (UNISA) to travel to South Africa twice, in



THE OLD THRONE OF THE CHALICE BROUGHT
BY REV. FR. AYOUB EL-ANBA- BISHOY, 1948



THE PROCESSION CROSS BROUGHT BY REV. FR.
AYOUB EL-ANBA- BISHOY, 1948



THE 1950 ORDINATION OF METROPOLITAN MORCOS OF SOUTH AFRICA & NIGERIA BY HIS HOLINESS POPE YOUSAB II - 115TH POPE OF ALEXANDRIA & PATRIARCH OF THE SEE OF SAINT MARK



COPTIC ORTHODOX ZULU FROM NATAL & SOTHO FROM SEBOKENG - FIRST VISIT TO THE COPTIC CENTRE 21/11/1992. MR SIMON KHOBE'S FAMILY MEMBERS & OTHERS. FEW BAPTISED BY ANBA MORCOS. LATE MRS ENSAF HENEIN APPEARS (DEPARTED WIFE OF ENGINEER LABIB HANNA)



THE JOY OF THE PEOPLE AT MVUNYANE, KWAZULU-NATAL, RECEIVING THE COPTIC BISHOP IN EARLY 1994 AFTER AN ABSENCE OF THE C.O.C FOR 43 YEARS. A COLOURFUL BLANKET WAS USED TO DECORATE THE BISHOP & WAS GIFTED WITH ACCOMPANYING SINGING AND CLAPPING



Nº 1886

Photograph of
Applicant (The Head
of the Family).

THE COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE,

COPY

Application Form

For Membership of Families

into The Orthodox Church of ST. Mark's Apostolate.

Surname _____

Name (In bloc letters) _____

Nationality _____

Address _____

Town _____ District _____ Province _____

Age _____ Birthplace _____

Social State (Married or not) _____

Names, ages and occupations of members of the family

1) _____ (Wife)

2) _____ (_____)

3) _____ (_____)

4) _____ (Children)

5) _____ (_____)

6) _____ (Brothers)

7) _____ (_____)

8) _____ (_____)

9) _____ (Other relatives)

10) _____ (_____)

Official Authentication

Signature of Applicant

N. B. 1 - This form is given to every applicant freely.

2 - Signature of applicant & the above-stated particulars should be duly authenticated and / or confirmed by the competent Public Authority.

TO HIS HOLINESS ABRA YOUSSEF II, POPE OF ALEXANDRIA AND PATRIARCH OF
ST. MARK'S APOSTOLATE, OF EGYPT, JERUSALEM, ETHIOPIA, NUBIA, PENTAPOLIS,
AND THE WHOLE OF AFRICA,

COPTIC ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE,

CAIRO EGYPT.

Your Holiness,

I beg hereby to apply personally and on behalf of my family for
admission and membership in the Congregation of our mother Orthodox Church
of ST. Mark's Apostolate ; to worship our One Eternal God in spirit and in
truth, to obey the Orthodox Faith and teaching of His Church, and work for
the further extension of his Kingdom.

I trust that my application will be accepted.

() 1950

Your faithful son &

obedient servant in the Lord

Accepted:
Bishop of South Africa

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1977 and 1979. Then, I was resident and serving in Nairobi, Kenya, when Professor Trevor Verryn asked me to give lectures at the university about ancient Christianity, and apostolicity on the African continent since the first century.

During these visits to South Africa, I was able to spend some time with the members of the Coptic Orthodox congregation in South Africa in the areas of Soweto, Daveyton, Sebokeng and Alberton. They had been baptised and served by Grace Archbishop Morcos, the Metropolitan of South Africa and Nigeria, who was ordained by the Holy Synod in the time of H.H. Pope Yousab II. This mission, however, served in South Africa for a period of less than one year with his returning to Egypt in 1951 and departing from this world in 1952 in the monastery of Saint (Anba) Bishoy.

I met the protopriest, Father Isaac El Anba Bishoy, in Khartoum, Sudan, in 1978 and together we studied the history of such an attempt to establish a diocese in South Africa. He stayed in South Africa from 1950-1968, while protopriest, Father Shenouda El Anba Bishoy and Deacon Aziz went back to Egypt after they had heard the news of the departure from this world of Anba Morcos in 1952.

Regrettably, none could complete the price of the Alberton land, upon which the Metropolitan had made a down payment. The deposit and all associated efforts were lost in the wind.

Nothing tangible was remaining in South Africa, except a few thousand faithful people of Zulu ethnicity, and the eternal name of the Coptic Orthodox Church, waiting for those who would come and lift it up, to defend her and make her viable for expansion and service.

THE COPTIC TEACHER- MR SIMON KHOBE

I told the story, to H.H., of this very faithful man from amongst the

Zulu people- Mr Simon Khobe. Today he is Father Morcos Khobe in whom the will of God remains most evident. He remains extremely zealous for the existence, growth and development of the Church, as he has been for more than forty years, striving to keep the name of the Coptic Orthodox Church appropriately, well elevated. Those who draw close to him quickly become aware of his unwavering devotion and faithfulness to the Church and his total conviction that the Coptic Orthodox is the true, apostolic and original African Church.

In 1948, Mr Khobe was baptised at the hands of Father Ayob El Anba Bishoy, who later became Anba Morcos. Father Ayob had been sent by Pope Yousab to investigate the prospects for establishing a diocese in South Africa. He presented a full report on this subject to the Pope when he returned to Egypt in 1949. It was full of hope that such an exercise would be very fruitful and successful and following this, the new Archbishop of South Africa and Nigeria was ordained. Such a diocese was extraordinary, since even today, Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, is about eight hours flying time northwest from Johannesburg in South Africa.

Mr Simon Khobe was not ordained as a deacon or priest but was a Lord-fearing man who loved the service. After the metropolitan, monks and Egyptian deacon left him, he did not find any direct source of orthodox teaching, education or follow-up about the Coptic Church. Consequently, he developed a correspondence with Dr Wahib Atalla, who later became the protopriest Fr Bakhoum El Moharaky, and subsequently H.G. Bishop Gregorius, the Bishop for Higher Coptic Studies.

He also corresponded with various monks from the Coptic monasteries and some other laymen in Cairo. They all continued to send him various English materials with which he was able to learn and teach the South African people in the Zulu language- their vernacular.

The teacher, Mr Khobe, resigned his professional appointment, donned a black shirt with a white collar and referred to himself as **Reverend Simon Khobe, the pastor of the Coptic Orthodox Church of South Africa**. He took much care to shepherd the few thousand Zulu Coptic Orthodox people who were baptised by the Bishop and his priests. He never gave himself any rest but kept moving continuously to all branches where Copts existed. He was baptising people, making weddings and funerals, supporting the people and holding the name of the Church high.

APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

Until the South African electorate spoke in 1994, the Republic of South Africa was under the severest type of racist government, which resulted in international economic sanctions by a large number of nations from all over the world, striving to give all South Africans their full rights, irrespective of colour or ethnicity.

During this period of racial discrimination, it was extremely difficult for anyone whose pigment was not very fair (white) to be given a visa to enter South Africa. Therefore, Simon Khobe's initiative and activities were indeed perhaps the only way the Coptic Orthodox Church's name could have been upheld until the full disbandment of the apartheid machine, which was well under way with the arrival of the Coptic Orthodox Bishopric of African Affairs in October, 1992.

HOW, WHEN AND WHERE CAN WE START IN SOUTH AFRICA

But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name Be joyful in You. PSALM 5:11

The flight from Cairo to Nairobi was approximately four and half

hours, arriving in Nairobi at about 6:30 a.m. While I was travelling from Cairo after meeting H.H. in 1991, there were a multitude of questions coming into my thoughts. All the questions added up to two dominant ones: How can this project be? Where can we start? I remembered my previous South African visits for the purpose of lecturing. Very specific visas were required in 1977 and 1979 at the height of apartheid. The following impressions occupied my thoughts:

- ◊ Economic sanctions and the difficulty in obtaining a visa to enter the country
- ◊ The great size of Johannesburg, the capital of South Africa, which was not less than any big capital in Europe or the Americas- its civilisation, advancement, engineered roads and freeways, high-rise buildings, the great wealth of the mines and the powerful economy of gold and diamonds
- ◊ The recommendations of the Zulu elders that land and a church building should be acquired first and registered in the name of the Church. Such registration would provide an immediate formal acknowledgment that the Church existed in South Africa, with recognition of an accompanying legal right to start serving, preaching and having a mission, establishing itself with the capacity to open new branches.
- ◊ South Africa has common boundaries with many countries in southern Africa in which there is the potential to plant churches. These include Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique.
- ◊ My great weakness and limitation in facing such diversity and immense needs, including significant financial implications.

- 0 The greatness of God and His infinite gifts; how He had never forsaken us and was glorified with us in Kenya. As we entered a Nairobi auction to buy a hotel, we made the sign of the Cross but honestly had all doubts that we had any real chance of obtaining it. Remarkably, none else came for the auction and we were able to take the hotel for one third of its value price at that time. A hotel and bar was subsequently transformed into the Bishopric of African Affairs, including a beautiful Saint Mark Cathedral, vocational training centre, clinic and later, a forty bed hospital. All of these recollections gave much more confidence and trust in the ability of the Lord who would surely enable us to do something in South Africa.

To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

Show me Your ways, O Lord;

Teach me Your paths. PSALM 25:1, 4

I raised the matter to the Lord in prayer and every day I had nothing in my heart except that I should wait for Him to open the way and show me what to do. I did not ever imagine or expect that He would open one door after the other by this marvellous and miraculous way...

It was only a few weeks after my return to Nairobi in June 1991 that the last "white" president of South Africa, FW de Klerk paid an official visit to Kenya. The Kenyan president, Daniel Arap Moi received him, and in a public speech, De Klerk declared that apartheid in South Africa was ending, and all visa restrictions on Africans entering South Africa had been lifted. For me, this was a declaration from God. After a few weeks more, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), in which I was occupying the seat of Vice President from 1981, invited me to go to Maputo, the capital of Mozambique- a country on the south eastern coast of the continent on the Indian Ocean- for a general committee meeting scheduled for September 1991.

When inquiring about how we would reach Maputo, I was informed that there was an anticipated two hours transit in Johannesburg. 17 September 1991, as the British Airways flight from Nairobi was landing in Johannesburg, I saw a huge city and an apparently very prosperous country that looked familiarly like Europe. I made the sign of the Cross, and lifting my heart to God I said: "Lord, you know the place, which you have prepared for us and assigned for the Coptic Church to be Yours. You know Your place in South Africa for the expansion of Your kingdom on earth but I do not know what is the place and how to reach it. Would you take my hand, Lord, and lead me to that place that You have assigned for us? Let Your will be fulfilled."

In the transit lounge in Johannesburg airport, we got to know that the two hours transit time had been prolonged to nine hours due to delay in the aircraft going to Mozambique. This meant that I had an unplanned, nine hours idle time in Johannesburg.

***All things do well for those who love the Lord* ROMANS 8:28**

Anyone hearing about a delay of seven hours would probably not be happy about the loss of time and would likely construe this as a misfortune or inconvenient airline mismanagement. Spending such time waiting in the airport may promote further negative feelings. However, I felt strangely happy and looked on this as an opportunity to go into Johannesburg and survey the scene. It proved to be a plan of God for us to find, on that same day, a very suitable place, which would secure an historical, southern African headquarters for great mission, to serve generation after generation to come.

NINE HOURS TRANSIT IN JOHANNESBURG

On application for South African entry in the Johannesburg Airport

Immigration, I was granted a ten-day transit visa. Having changed some money, I took a taxi, asking the driver to take me to a real estate office. He, however, indicated his lack of knowledge of such a place where properties are bought and sold, so instead I requested that he take me to a government information office.

The hand of the Lord was really leading me step by step, as Saint Paul says in Romans 11:33-35: *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable [are] His judgments and His ways past finding out! "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counsellor?" "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him [are] all things, to whom [be] glory forever. Amen.*

The "white" officer at the Government Information Office received me very courteously. I introduced myself as the Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church responsible for African Affairs, coming to South Africa to look for a property to buy for the Church. I explained that I was looking to buy something like a disused church building. He opened a large register to examine a list of hundreds of estate agents, while I was making the sign of the Cross on him. He selected one company, Eskel Jawitz, explaining that it was very large and able, and would be in a position to assist.

PARKVIEW-ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SUBURBS OF JOHANNESBURG

Johannesburg comprises hundreds of districts known as suburbs. Once the name of the suburb of Parkview had been mentioned in the downtown Government Information Office, it became an historical name for the mission of the Coptic Orthodox Church in South Africa.

The officer informed me that Eskel Jawitz's real estate office was in

the main shopping centre in Parkview and that reaching there was no more than a five-kilometre drive.

***Oh, how great [is] Your goodness, Which You have laid up for those who fear You, [Which] You have prepared for those who trust in You* PSALM 31:19**

The Lord was truly preparing a great gift for the Coptic Orthodox Church for the sake of mission in Africa...

I took another taxi to the real estate office in Parkview. While entering there, I asked myself: "What are you doing? Is this an unduly hasty action? Is it really understood according to a good plan? Is it wisdom to try to buy a church while in transit?" I made the sign of the Cross on myself, and the door of the company office, as my thoughts answered me, questioning: 'Didn't Saint John Chrysostom say, "The Lord is working but he has a human partner?"'

I asked the Lord for His guidance and His will, and because of my trust that it is not my will but His will, I really believed very strongly that He would guide my steps and lead me to what is good.

While I was thinking deeply, putting one foot forwards and one foot backwards, I really felt that the Lord was saying: "I am with you". A lady appeared at the door of the office, speaking to me in Arabic. She asked me, in the style of a Lebanese salutation: "What is your colour? (*sic* "How are you?") What are you looking for?"

Inside, various sales representatives asked me several questions as I presented my purpose to them. They, and the company owner, Mr Eskel, sat around a table listening to me explain that I wanted to buy a church. I was told that South Africa was a very religious country, not like the United States, for example, where churches-for-sale were in abundance. I further explained that I would also look for a

larger piece of land that may have a house to live in while the church was being built.

A suggestion was made to examine a property that had been a Greek Orthodox School but shut for the previous three years. A Greek Orthodox family who had, so far, been unable to sell it owned it. Furthermore, it was situated within walking distance of the real estate office, and a telephone call confirmed with the owner that it was a convenient time to view the property.

"... Who has brought you here was the Lord Jesus, Our Mother the Virgin Saint Mary and Saint Nicholas."

It was a beautiful spring day, so the sales representatives and I set off walking for five minutes to the neglected school, located in Selkirk Road and surrounded by large walls. I noticed a substantial, two-storey building and at the entrance gate of No. 11 Selkirk, stood a seventy- something year old woman dressed in black. When she saw me, she signed herself with the Cross, raised her eyes towards heaven and said a very audible prayer in the Greek language. With my scant knowledge of Greek, I could guess that she was saying: "Thank you Lord."

She asked: "Have you come to look at this property?"

I replied: "Yes."

She questioned: "Are you orthodox?"

I said: "Yes."

She said: "From where?"

I responded: "Egypt."

She said: "Are you Coptic?"

I affirmed.

She asked: "Are you a priest?"

I replied: "Bishop."

She inquired: "What's your name?"

I answered: "Bishop Markos."

She explored: "Do you know who brought you here?"

I was surprised by the question but explained: "I am praying to God to give me a place that will be suitable for the mission of the Church in South Africa."

She declared: "No, no... definitely what has brought you here is my prayers; I have been praying for your coming for the last three years! What brought you here is the Lord Jesus, our Mother the Virgin Saint Mary and Saint Nicholas."

Smiling, I asked her to explain further, and she did, saying that her husband, Mr Protopappas, had died three years before, and being unable to manage the school, she had closed it, putting it for sale. Her three children were exerting much pressure on her to demolish the building and construct townhouses from which they could gain millions of South African Rands. Mrs Protopappas was obstinately refusing, persisting in prayer to God that the place should be kept for orthodox education and worship. Never yielding, it is very clear that the faith of this woman was much stronger than all the pressures, doubts and challenges that she had to face.

Later, I learned that she had offered the Greek Orthodox

Church of South Africa to buy the building for church purposes but they asked her to give it them free of charge. As this was her sole source of income, she was unable to do so, declining this suggestion.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, 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. PHILIPPIANS 4:6,7

Truly, the presence of the Lord was palpable during those moments of standing on the pavement on Selkirk Road in Parkview, facing this God-fearing widow when she was declaring her faith, hearing the answer to her prayers.

I don't know how much the real estate representatives believed in the Lord and His unlimited power, greatness and wisdom but anybody who lived these moments could surely not keep from crying: "I have seen the Lord! I have touched Him! I have experienced Him!"

I was really wondering about His great deeds- *And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace* (Isaiah 9:6). My heart was saying: the Lord has put the foot of the Coptic Orthodox Church on the entrance of a great centre for the Coptic Church in Johannesburg.

By this time it was about 3 p.m. and I needed to soon return to the airport to catch the flight to Mozambique. Assuredly, the day's experiences were not the result of any human effort, finding such a suitable place in such an abbreviated timeframe. Usually, through human means such a find may take months or years of great effort.

We entered the main building of two storeys, comprising thirteen

hundred square metres on more than five thousand square metres of land. With every step I could see that this was a great gift-through the large dining room, kitchen and many classrooms and dormitories that had served the thousands of boarders and day students who attended the nursery, primary and secondary schools from 1925-1969. The land was completely adequate to accommodate a cathedral, and, with removal of the existing swimming pool, a theological college.

In real faith I made the sign of the Cross on the buildings and the land, asking the Lord to place His hands on them. I, likewise, sought the prayers of Saint Mark to make this place for the Coptic Orthodox Church to serve for many generations and was reminded of Nairobi 1983. Then, I had made the sign of the Cross on the hotel and the Lord had made a great success of that project.

While walking up the stairs with Mrs Tina Protopappas, she looked at me and said: "You came in the proper moment as the pressure to knock off this building and make a large development project, from the contractors and my children, has been daily increasing." I reminded her of the wise Solomon: *To everything [there] [is] a season, A time for every purpose under heaven* (Ecclesiastes 3:1), and that we cannot say that we are late or early as all these times are assigned and known by God.

On my way back from Mozambique to Kenya, I had to stop in Johannesburg for negotiating a school purchase price. My heart was telling me that as the Lord was sending His disciples two by two, then it is wisdom to call for somebody else to walk with me through these very important historical steps. From Mozambique, I phoned Father Sourial Youssef who was the Coptic Orthodox priest in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, as this was the nearest Coptic Church to Johannesburg. (Today Father Sourial is serving in Christchurch, New Zealand.)

Father Sourial and I met in Johannesburg the following Tuesday evening and spent the whole of Wednesday looking at various properties for sale, to enable us to ascertain the market value of the school we wished to purchase. According to our survey, the five stands of land, without buildings, were valued at around South African Rands 1.25 million (at that time US\$ 330,000) for approximately 5,100 square metres.

THE LORD LEADS AND HE SAYS: "FOLLOW ME"

While travelling with Father Sourial to the real estate office, I was acutely aware of my human frailty and limited human abilities to negotiate the purchase price, payable by the Coptic Church. However, I was confident in the work of the Lord Who started with us a great, good deed and, without doubt, would complete it. This realisation gave me an immense boost and encouragement, as I was reminded of my encounter with Him on the pavement outside the school. I had felt His presence and even touched and seen Him, and known that all things happen through His will and organisation. In spite of this, the devil tried to delay us from reaching the place of the meeting, as the drunken taxi driver lost his way, turning a five-minute trip into an epic one and a half hours. Even so, the three progeny of Mrs Tina Protopappas were waiting for us.

THE CURRENCY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The primary unit of currency in South Africa is known as "Rand". At that time, South African Rands 3 (three) was equal to one United States dollar (US\$) if funds, for the purpose of buying a property, were being transferred internationally to South Africa. In such a transaction, the currency was converted as a "Finrand" or "financial Rand". However, in domestic transactions, such as hotel accommodation and food purchases, the exchange rate was South African Rands 2.8 for every US\$ 1.

Speaking to the daughter and two sons of the widow, we initially offered the equivalent of US\$ 250,000, which was approximately South African Rands 750,000. This was rejected with an indication that much more was appropriate. One of the sons pointed out that each of the five stands was valued at South African Rands 250,000 and that a more realistic offer would be South African Rands 1,250,000. After some negotiation, we mutually agreed that South African Rands 1,000,000 (US\$ 330,000) would be the total purchase price.

I requested that the real estate manager allow me to make a telephone call to Pope Shenouda, not really knowing exactly where he was at that time. I did know that he, in his capacity as one of the presidents of the World Council of Churches (WCC), was at WCC meetings in Switzerland. Not having his accommodation address, I decided to call the telephone number of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Geneva. The priest answered, explaining that he had returned briefly- for a few minutes only- to collect a book for H.H. and then to return to the hotel where they were all staying with the Pope. He gave me the number of H.H. at the hotel. At that moment there was great clarity that truly: *He ... opens and none shuts.* (Revelation 3:7), and that indeed this was a great blessing to be able to start firm negotiations with the Protopappas family to sign the initial purchase contract.

THE SCHOOL HISTORY: EDUCATIONAL, SPIRITUAL AND ORTHODOX

On the telephone, I spoke to H.H. about the known history of the building, further elaborated in the following:

- o 1907 Saint Winifred's Anglican School was bought and founded in Yeoville, Johannesburg.
- o 1922 Mrs Ethel Marian Burton Hall took over the running of the

school, which she did until her death in September 1935.

- ◇ 1923 Saint Winifred's was relocated to Parkview, Johannesburg. The school building was taking place on Erf 575 (11 Selkirk Road) and five adjoining stands had been purchased to accommodate the school property (9-17 Selkirk Road). Until the third term of 1925, Saint Winifred's in Kilkenny Road occupied two rented houses, when the school moved completely to Selkirk Road.
- ◇ 1935-1941, the school continued as Saint Winifred's, after the departure of Mrs Hall, until it was bought by Mrs Hill, who changed the name to Red Hill School.
- ◇ 1941-1945, the Red Hill School. 1946 Red Hill School moved and the building was established as the Bertolis Hellenic School.
- ◇ 1946-1965, the Bertolis Hellenic School- run by a Greek Orthodox family.
- ◇ 1965-1989, owned by an Egyptian born Greek, Mr Dimitri Protopappas, who served as principal of the then named, Hellenic College- a Greek, orthodox school. The Hellenic College closed after the death of Mr Protopappas.
- ◇ 1989-1992, the building remained unoccupied apart from assorted, vagrant people and copious vermin.

Mrs Protopappas had been unable to maintain the school after her husband's departure and so it had been closed. However, through the prayer and faith of this devout woman, the grace of God gave these very suitable premises to the Coptic Orthodox Church to start in South Africa and surrounding countries.

I explained to H.H. how the Lord led me to the school in Parkview

and what had been done in regards to the price of the property. I further stated to H.H. that: "The presence of God was very clear, and it was very practical; it was a gift of God to the whole Coptic Orthodox Church to invest in this land and property for the expansion of the Church's ministry and mission."

H.H. was exceedingly pleased, encouraging and promising to send ten per cent of the purchase price, that is the down payment for the purchase of the property - South African Rands 100,000.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE SUCCESSOR OF SAINT MARK

Once I took the blessings of H.H. Pope Shenouda III for this historical event, I went back to the meeting with the realtor and the Protopoulos family.

The sons of the widow declared that they could no longer accept the price of South African Rands 1,000,000 (one million) but now sought South African Rands 1,300,000 (one million three hundred thousand). I was shocked to learn of this change, which I had been unaware of while speaking to the Pope.

I explained to them that: "I took the blessings of the head of the Church for the price of South African Rands 1,000,000, and I could not change the price; this is the orthodox way, that everything should move in straight lines with full transparency and clarity; if anything like this proposed alteration occurred, then there must have been something wrong in the whole project from the beginning."

The sons insisted on their raised price but I was unable to change my words and terms of explanation to Pope Shenouda. I asserted that we were very serious buyers and equally insisted to place a written offer for South African Rands 1,000,000, which we did, signed by Father Sourial and me. We left our Harare and Nairobi

contact information with the realtor and placed everything in the hands of our God through prayer because He started this and is able to complete...

Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "that you may be justified in your words, and may overcome when you are judged" ROMANS 3:3-4

It was the morning of Friday, 24 September, 1991, when Father Sourial Youssef and I went to a bank to open a non-resident's account in the name of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and also, to see an attorney to oversee the purchase and complete conveyance of the property.

Later, I phoned Mrs Protopappas to request the opportunity of compiling a comprehensive inventory of the building's contents and she conveyed an enormous eagerness to meet me before my travel back to Zimbabwe and Kenya. When we met, she registered concern that there had been no full agreement achieved amongst her sons and me.

I repeated the story of the blessings of our Pope for South African Rands 1,000,000 to which her sons had added a further South African Rands 300,000. I advised her to convince them, before I spoke to the Pope, to honour the price upon which we had originally agreed. Furthermore, I reminded her that that was the orthodox way and if she were unable to do so, her prayers of three years, for us to come and take the place, would go without fruits. She promised, with a very great determination in her appearance and voice, that she would persuade her sons that the agreement had to be respected.

THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE PURCHASE OFFER

Father Sourial and I travelled to Harare, and then onwards to Nairobi. It was one week later, in early October 1991, that our attorney telephoned us to advise that the Protopappas family accepted the initial proposal involving the South African Rands 1,000,000 purchase price.

In Nairobi, we gave offerings of thanks to the Lord for His great gift in South Africa. There would be an altar to the Lord in that great land, as it was prophesied by Isaiah the prophet: *In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border. And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the Lord because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Saviour and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them. Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the Lord and perform [it]* (Isaiah 19:19-21)

DOES EVIL - THE ENEMY OF ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS - ACCEPT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THESE ALTARS WITHOUT RESISTANCE AND OBSTACLES?

Three years had passed since the departure from this world of Mr Dimitri Protopappas, the owner, and the resultant closure of the Hellenic College. According to the rules of the local government authority, the licence for use of the premises for educational and worship purposes had, hence, lapsed.

By South African law, our attorney Mr Michael Clacey had to advertise in the media about the offer of the Coptic Orthodox Church to buy the property, and the proposed use for educational and worship purposes. Simultaneously, he applied to reinstate the licence, opening the opportunity for the neighbourhood to comment.

In response, there were thirteen written objections to the local government authority, from the neighbours and the neighbours' neighbours, all apparently from substantially wealthy backgrounds, threatening the most evil resistance to the Church.

The South African attorney called me in Nairobi, stating that if I did not come to Johannesburg for a public hearing to face the objectors on January 13, 1992, the deal would assuredly be lost due to the vehemence of the objectors.

I decided to travel to Johannesburg, as the project seemed in great jeopardy.

***... praising God and having favour with all the people.
And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. ACTS 2:47***

These were the words with which the Holy Spirit has inspired Saint Luke the Evangelist, in his writing of the book of Acts, to give assurance that the expansion of the Church and her fruits are guaranteed, in spite of all the apparent obstacles and challenges by the enemy of righteousness.

Our faith was very strong that the power of the Lord would remove all of these objections. The devil was apparently provoking so that the mission of the Church in South Africa would be hindered or postponed for sometime until another location could be found where the neighbourhood could establish a church and theological college.

THE POWER OF PUBLIC OPINION

The neighbourhood was afraid that establishing a church in proximity would make the prices of adjacent land plummet, most adversely affecting their interests. They viewed a church as a public place, promoting noise and car crowded streets during the time of

worship. Similarly, they feared students with young children would cause unwanted extra disturbance.

The local authorities very much respect the opinion of the existing neighbourhood when initiating any new projects, whilst many members of the neighbourhood have no apparent interest in the mission or service of the Church. Instead, they unashamedly assert their own individual interests over all others.

A CRUCIAL MEETING IN JOHANNESBURG - THE GRACE OF THE LORD WAS WORKING

After a flight from Nairobi to Johannesburg, I took a taxi to the scheduled meeting in Parkview. There, I found a group of very harsh-looking, authoritative and well-heeled men and women, taking food and drink together in an open area outside the meeting hall. On sighting me, they combatively chorused to each other: "No, no, no.... We shall never accept a church or school! We shall oppose all this..."

THE POWER OF THE HOLY CROSS

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God
1 CORINTHIANS 1:28

Looking at the determination of the people to reject and oppose, I had no power except that of the holy cross. Very quietly, I started moving amongst them, making the sign of the Cross on each person, front and back. I was confident that the power of the Cross would work very strongly in their hearts, so that we could prevail, in spite of their obvious belligerence. I prayed that the Holy Spirit would speak in their hearts through His spirit.

The meeting commenced with me flanked by Mr Clacey, the

attorney, and the realtor, Mr Jawitz. I requested that the gathering grant me some minutes of their valuable time to acquaint them with the Church from which I came. With their acceptance, I proceeded to elaborate on the glories of the Coptic Orthodox Church, including: Saint Mark who established the Church in Alexandria; the blessings of the holy family in Egypt; the blessings of the early patriarchs who came to Egypt, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as Moses, who was born in Egypt and was disciplined by all the wisdom of the Egyptians. I further detailed the global influence of the Coptic Church on Christianity through the heroes of faith, like Athanasius who, in 325 AD, wrote the Nicene or Athanasian Creed, used as a universal confession of faith by multitudes of Christians in different denominations all over the world. Likewise, I told them about Saint Anthony, the establishing father of monastic life in the whole world, and other early fathers of the Church whose writings and teachings continue to enlighten and provide enduring examples of lives of holiness, from generation to generation.

Then, I presented the personality of H.H. Pope Shenouda III to them, including the fact that the Browning Institute, in 1978, had given him the title of best Christian Educator in the World. I finally introduced myself, telling them of service in the field of medicine with practice and teaching in Ethiopia, and my responsibility as the Coptic Orthodox Bishop of African Affairs, under whose auspices South Africa fell.

In conclusion, I pointed out that I intended to live on the premises as the person responsible for establishing the Church in South Africa, and that what disturbed them would disturb me, reassuring that I would not allow for disturbance to continue if it ever occurred. A woman from the neighbourhood questioned: "You mean to say that you are from the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt?"

I responded: "Yes."

She added: "This is the best church in the world."

I thanked her for this statement and reopened the forum for discussion, starting to feel that the overwhelming rejection that had first permeated the meeting was dissipating.

THE VOICE OF THE LORD *quenches the flames of fire* PSALM 29:7

The great wave of resistance seemed to be steadily subsiding with each question I fielded. In detail, they probed our intentions for the premises, asking if we intended opening a nursery school. I reassured them that the students attending would be different from those of our predecessor, the Hellenic College, and would be predominantly adults- deacons for theological education. I further explained that we anticipated monks and nuns living on the property, engaged in fasting, prayer and meditation, serving as a blessing for the whole neighbourhood.

Mr Clacey, the attorney, became very excited by the shifting meeting dynamics, declaring that there should be no objections from anyone, as the Coptic Church was, without doubt, genuine. Further to this, he enthusiastically confided that he had felt there was a very definite power and grace that came from the words I had spoken.

Through the grace of God and divine power, eight of the objectors accepted the idea of the Church buying the property, withdrawing their objections. The remainder awaited a site visit, scheduled for the next day.

FINANCES NEEDED

Our attorney assured us that the five remaining objectors would undoubtedly be neutralised at the planned site visit and the formalities to transfer were, therefore, imminent. We had paid South African Rands 100,000 deposit at the signing of the contract, and it

was then necessary to be ready with the remaining South African Rands 900,000 to enable the conveyance of the property and full registration, in the name of the Coptic Orthodox Church, within a few weeks.

... being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete [it] until the day of Jesus Christ
PHILIPPIANS 1:6

Realising the depth of the blessing of the Lord who was removing one obstacle after the other, accompanied by the obvious clarity of His will in establishing the Coptic Orthodox Church in South Africa, I felt a very great trust in His heart, understanding well that this work was not human but heavenly, and divine will.

I was on the return flight to Nairobi in January 1992, meditating on our progress in South Africa and my heart was singing in praise of the Lord with Psalm 116:12,13: *What shall I render to the Lord (For) all His benefits toward me? I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the Lord.*

When my human mind examined, knowing well what was in hand, the financial responsibilities of the Bishopric of African Affairs, including: the balance of US\$ 300,000 to complete the purchase price; the day-to-day bishopric operational expenses; the monetary support of deacons, priests and servants in four African countries- Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia- and now, in South Africa, I found no human solution for the large sum of money required. However, fully depending on the Lord was really giving me reassurance, as it is written in Psalm 118:8, 9: *[It] [is] better to trust in the Lord Than to put confidence in man. [It] [is] better to trust in the Lord Than to put confidence in princes.*

It is a true experience of all those who work in the field of mission in

Africa- while human support intermittently disappears, it is only the Lord's help that endures and gives according to His divine, heavenly power.

As I was accustomed, in the service of Africa over twenty-five years, I consciously chose not to focus apprehensively on the obstacles and difficulties but, instead, to concentrate on prayer. The Lord has so many ways to respond to such prayer, beyond the mind of man, and to solve seemingly insurmountable exigencies.

I asked the attorney for an adequate period to enable provision of the finances needed to complete the price, while waiting for the Lord to shine His face, bless us and show us mercy. The great saints who are heroes of faith- like, our mother the Virgin Saint Mary, Saint Mina the Miracles Performer and Saint Mercurius (Abu Sefein), Saint George - played an immense role, through their prayers and supplications, in alleviating much of the duress of the tribulations that were faced.

THE SUMMER YOUTH CONVENTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND CANADA

First in the early 1980s, it was the will of God that organised the youth conventions in the United States and Canada at the time of the summer month vacation. Young men and women gather together in a spiritual atmosphere, sharing prayers, praises, songs, Bible studies and discussions of any subjects raised by them about which they opt to confer, particularly in relation to specific problems they may face in these countries. This has had a profoundly positive influence on their spiritual, social, academic and professional lives.

It happened that the Lord used me, with the elder brother in my family- Father Roufail the priest of Detroit- to establish those conferences year after year. Nineteen years ago, Father Roufail asked me for suggestions about how to occupy the youth in their



MRS TINA PROTOPAPPAS- GREEK WIDOW WHO RECEIVED ME AT GATE NO. 11:
 "WHO BROUGHT YOU HERE IS THE LORD JESUS, THE VIRGIN SAINT MARY & SAINT
 NICHOLAS". PICTURE- PRAYER OF THE HOUSE BLESSING AT HER HOME IN 1993.



GATE 11, SELKIRK ROAD, PARKVIEW, JOHANNESBURG- HISTORICAL SPOT WHERE
 THE HAND OF THE LORD LED ME IN SEPTEMBER 1991, WHILE IN TRANSIT. THIS
 PICTURE- JANUARY 1993, DEACON FAROUK (LATER FATHER JOHANNES) APPEARS.



THE OLD HELLENIC COLLEGE BUILDING AS WE RECEIVED IT IN 1992



THE SAME BUILDING IN 2002: THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, AFTER ADDING A THIRD FLOOR TO IT



THE COPTIC TOWERS, ARCH AND CROSSES ON GATE 15, SELKIRK ROAD, PARKVIEW, JOHANNESBURG- MAIN ENTRANCE BISHOPRIC HEADQUARTERS, & ST MARK CATHEDRAL & SAINT ATHANASIOUS THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION BUILT 2001



COPTIC TOWERS, ARCH AND CROSSES ON NGONG ROAD, NAIROBI, KENYA- MAIN ENTRANCE BISHOPRIC HEADQUARTERS, CATHEDRAL & HOSPITAL. PREVIOUSLY A HOTEL AND BAR- TRANSFORMED THROUGH A MIRACLE & BUILT 1990.

summer vacations, as most of them were idle and hence, liable to destructive, worldly influences. We invited the youth from Toronto, Detroit, Chicago and Cleveland, gathering over sixty participants in a rented school in Detroit, passing a very bright week of spiritual activities that were enjoyed thoroughly by all. The youth requested that we repeat this year after year, and as it started in the mid-west, it spread to the east and west coasts, southern America, eastern Canada, western Canada, Australia, England and even, to the main capitals of Europe.

These highly effective spiritual celebrations have proven to be most educational, providing blessings throughout the whole year and partially sustaining our youth until the following convention.

The youth are the future of the Church, as it has been rightly expressed: A church without youth is a church without a future, and wisely added: Youth without a church are youth without a future.

THE 1992 SUMMER, UNITED STATES YOUTH, AND THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS WORKING IN AFRICA

After praying the liturgy in Saint Athanasius Church in the Valley, the financial needs of the new headquarters of the church in Johannesburg were keeping my mind busy. I refrained from thinking deeply about it but determined to address this subject continually in prayer, petitions and fasting, so the Lord would declare His way. I had no doubt that the financial needs would be met but it would be by the Lord's ways beyond man's ability, expectations or thinking.

As had become usual in July, we were moving from one convention to another in Canada and the United States. We also visited the monastery of Saint Anthony in the desert of California. During 1986, 1987 and 1988, while I was researching for my doctorate in missiology at Fuller School of World Mission (Pasadena, California), the Lord had used me at Saint Anthony's monastery to revive the

monastic life. Throughout these events, I prayed day and night for the needs of South Africa.

DISCOUNT IN THE PRICE OF THE SALE- US\$ 100,000

A deacon in Saint Athanasius Church in the Los Angeles Valley offered to accompany me while I undertook some administrative tasks for the service in Africa. I asked him about his profession and he explained that he worked in the money and real estate markets. More than this, I knew that he was a very blessed deacon by the name of Rafat Iskander.

We discussed how to find out the current exchange rate of the US\$ to the South African Rands, and he promptly phoned the New York stock exchange to bring me this information. What a joyful message he delivered me, as the Lord used him as a channel of totally unexpected news, bringing a solution to the financial problem of Johannesburg!

The South African Rand had dropped in value from South African Rands 3 equalling US\$ 1 to South African Rands 4.5 equalling US\$ 1, reportedly resultant from political lability in South Africa. At the previous rate, we had needed US\$ 100,000 (one hundred thousand) multiplied by three, but after the devaluation, we required US\$ 100,000 multiplied by two to complete the purchase price. The Lord had arranged a US\$ 100,000 discount! How marvellous and almighty is the Lord who orchestrated an enormous change in the value of the currency to cover the price of such a strategic and historical property! When H.H. Pope Shenouda III heard about the miracle, which meant that only US\$ 200,000 was required to cover the price of the building, he offered US\$ 100,000 to the account of the South African Coptic Orthodox Church. We then had to only struggle to get the remaining US\$ 100,000 to secure the headquarters of the Coptic Orthodox Church in southern Africa.

A REQUEST FOR A SUFFICIENT PERIOD OF TIME TO COMPLETE THE PRICE

In July 1992, I phoned the South African attorney, Clacey, requesting his negotiation with Mrs Protopappas to give us a six-month period of grace to complete payment of the purchase price. I explained to him that we were prepared to deposit South African Rands 450,000, which, with the deposit of South African Rands 100,000, would make the payment more than half of the full price.

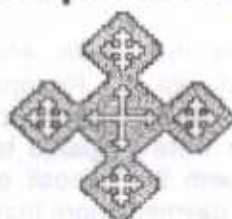
He explained to Mrs Protopappas that we wanted her family to keep the South African Rands 550,000, as a sort of guarantee that we were serious about buying the property. In response, we were given a further three months to complete the full payment.

SEEKING HELP FROM LOVERS OF EVANGELISM IN AFRICA

I kept contacting those dedicated sons of the Church, from all over the world, who love the service in Africa. They were given assurances that there is a clear, notable miracle happening and that the mighty hand of the Lord was working very strongly towards establishing a headquarters of the Coptic Orthodox Church in South Africa. Some gave contributions to their utmost capacity, while others gave loans to the Bishopric of African Affairs, which were gradually repayable. After all this, the bishopric was in need of US\$ 50,000.

There was a property in Cairo that I had been preparing to make as a residence for the Bishopric of African Affairs. I sold this and transferred the proceedings to the Church in South Africa, enabling the balance to be paid in full. The property, with the glory of God, was subsequently transferred into the name of the Coptic Orthodox Church of South Africa, 31 August, 1992.

Chapter Two



RECEIVING THE GIFT OF GOD

The Coptic Centre In Johannesburg



AUGUST 1996- H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III WITH SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT NELSON MANDELA IN THE PRETORIA STATE HOUSE, WITH H.G. BISHOP A. MARKOS & HER EXCELLENCY THE EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR IN SOUTH AFRICA MS MOUSHIRA KHATTAB



**APRIL 1997- THE PEOPLE OF SAINT PAUL CHURCH, VOSLOORUS, IN
THE PROCESSION OF THE RECEPTION OF H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III**



**13/08/1995 - H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III
IN THE CONSECRATION CEREMONY
OF SAINT MARK CHURCH, PARYS-
REV. FR SAMUEL BOULOS APPEARS**



11/2001- DURING THE VISIT OF H.G. BISHOP BENJAMIN- IN FRONT OF MAIN ALTAR OF ST MARK CATHEDRAL, JOHANNESBURG- APPEAR THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHBISHOP HIS EMINENCE SERAPHIM & HIS PRIESTS, ETHIOPIAN PRIEST & DEACON MEKONNEN BAYEH, COPTIC PRIESTS & DEACON & ENGINEER LABIB FARAG HANNA



**REV. FR CHRYSOSTOM FRANK ADDRESSING THE LEADERS OF THE
AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE SMALL CHURCH MADE FROM
THREE CLASSROOMS IN DECEMBER 1992**



**SAME CHURCH 11/2001- PRIESTS FROM KENYA & SOUTH AFRICA IN
PRIESTS' CONFERENCE HELD IN JOHANNESBURG THROUGH THE
BLESSINGS & PARTICIPATION OF HIS GRACE BISHOP BENJAMIN**

PROPERTY HANDOVER AND PREPARATION FOR THE GREAT MISSION WORK

After property transfer, I could not easily travel to South Africa to take over the building, examine it properly and assess what was necessary for rendering it liveable and suitable for the purpose for which it was intended. The All Africa Conference of Churches General Assembly September- October 1992 Harare, plus the duties in Kenya, with so many branches, and four other African countries where the Bishopric had responsibilities, meant time was very loaded day and night. Developing new church leadership means building the pyramid from its base to the apex, necessarily a slow, systematic and sustained process. This, superimposed on navigating through the day to day problems that precipitately arise, as well as the added dimensions of a vast, southern Africa and new South African mission provided immense challenges.

Was there any possibility that I could, all alone, successfully manage the service at the Johannesburg Centre, as well as the new mission in South Africa? Who would be able to take the responsibility of Kenya, Lusaka, Harare and Windhoek? Feeling that I really needed help, I asked, as usual, the One who unfailingly hears, provides and assists in relation to whatever I ask Him.

THE LORD WORKS AND HE HAS CO-WORKERS WITH HIM

1984, when I travelled to Lusaka, Zambia, to attend an All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) committee in my capacity as vice president, I met, through God's guidance, an engineer named Labib Farag Hanna. He worked there, as a chief executive of the national electricity supplier- Zesco, for seventeen years. From our first encounter, I could estimate this engineer's substantial administrative capacities accompanied by his great love for the Church. He had

made significant sacrifices in assisting with registration of the Church in Zambia, securing land, assisting with the building of the cathedral and making countless representations to the government on the Church's behalf. He had very plainly demonstrated his dedication to the Coptic Orthodox Church in Africa.

The will of God had organised Labib, with his wife, to come for a few days visit in August 1992 to Nairobi. He had just retired and I inquired about his plans for the future in Egypt. He explained that he had "no plans". I said to him: "You have served the world for many years- why don't you dedicate your experience and many of your years, while you and your wife are healthy, to come and become the administrator of the Coptic Centre in Johannesburg? We have bought a headquarters in Johannesburg and I have nobody to live there and administer the place. You have experience in Africa, you have known how to relate to African people and your English language is good enough for you to manage ably in South Africa."

Labib, with his wife Ensaf, joyfully accepted this invitation. They informed me of their plan to spend a few weeks holiday in Egypt, after which they would be ready to travel to South Africa.

And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues

1 CORINTHIANS 12:28

The mission of the Coptic Orthodox Church, which extended to many places throughout the whole world through the labours and struggles of our fathers, the apostles, needs many talents, abilities and gifts. ... *the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit [of] [all] (1 Corinthians 12:7)...for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the*

fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:12,13).

EXPANSION OF THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH INTO THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE CONTINENT

As the service of the Coptic Orthodox Church was starting establishment in South Africa- the fifth African country outside Egypt in the southern hemisphere- this was certainly of great historical significance. This had never occurred in the history of the Church, since the time of Saint Mark in the first century.

From 1976, as Bishop of African Affairs, I had carried responsibilities of pastoral care and evangelism, plus extensive ecumenical service duties. It requires little imagination to realise the extent of divine and human effort and energy that continued to be necessary to establish and grow the Church service over more than thirty different ethnicities in five countries over thousands of miles, with a commitment to serving people first in their mother tongues, translating all the prayer books into these languages.

The management of churches and related finances in these countries, plus the tremendous interest of Africans to join the church, requires superlative administration skills and familiarity with the region specific challenges. The assignment of Engineer Labib Hanna as Johannesburg administrator, put the new service on a very straight course from the outset, and was undoubtedly a Tailor-made gift.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF ADMINISTRATORS IN THE MISSION SERVICE OF THE CHURCH

The Holy Spirit speaks about the existence of administrative assistants side-by-side with the apostles and teachers, on whom spread of the gospel is contingent. Administrative assistants are generally involved in affairs like buying, selling, collection and

spending, and the Holy Spirit is generally insuring the assistants' wisdom and abilities to witness to newcomers to the Church. They should manifest the same spirit in the same Church from which they have emerged, and hence, should play a significant part in spreading the gospel because it is the one Spirit that works all in all.

"It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ACTS 6:2

The twelve apostles expressed that they should be full time in the serving of the Word, and this has the priority of the mission of the Church. Those who are "serving the tables," or the administrative side of the service are referred to as Diakonia.

Our fathers, the apostles laid down certain criteria for those serving in the capacity of Diakonia, so they could be effective administrators of the Church. They should be:

- ◇ highly recommended
- ◇ full of the Holy Spirit
- ◇ full of wisdom

Applying these pre-conditions, the Church has diversified and grown with a proliferation of varying talents and gifts, enhancing the spiritual Church's mission so that the service would be substantially fruitful.

Stefanos (Stephen) was a deacon full of the Holy Spirit, faith and power, making many wonders and miracles. His strong witness, however, was the object of many envious people who were the enemies of righteousness. Three political factions stood against him because of the great power of the witness of God in his mission.

ADMINISTRATION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN HEADQUARTERS- SAINT MARK COPTIC ORTHODOX CENTRE, JOHANNESBURG

Once we received the keys and took over the building in Johannesburg, 6 October 1992, we were able to examine it well and realised the need of extensive renovations and repairs. It had been closed for three years, being occupied only by itinerant, homeless people and vermin. Patience, sensitivity, care, copious energy, "blood, sweat and tears" were required to prepare the place for the great mission awaiting it.

Labib, and his wife Ensaf, were sound Christians with wide experience and proved to be very much a good choice, provided by the Lord, to manage the renovations and administrate the Centre.

CONDITION OF THE SCHOOL

While Labib, Ensaf and I arrived in October 1992, we were unable to live in the building because of the low state of cleanliness, and its dereliction. We rented rooms in a downtown hotel and commuted each day to Parkview, to initially make two rooms habitable, so that we could live on the premises as it was planned and renovated.

There were some primary considerations from the first day:

- ◇ The surrounding fence was in a state of dilapidation and readily admitted the approximate, twenty-five homeless people who sought its shelter from the elements every night.
- ◇ Wild pigeons, cockroaches, rats and bats infested the whole building.
- ◇ A place of prayer was required to enable commencement of praying of regular liturgies and the organised start of the spiritual service.

- ◊ The whole building and surrounds needed cleaning due to accumulated neglect over many years.
- ◊ Tons of Greek books were thrown in the school.
- ◊ Every part of the building required painting.
- ◊ A lot of plumbing and cryptic electrical wiring needed attention.
- ◊ The swimming pool was full of cracks and needed removal.
- ◊ The ground had become overrun with weeds and wild plants, full of insects, vermin and reptiles.
- ◊ Signboards were needed to show the presence of the Coptic Orthodox Church.
- ◊ New gates were essential to allow for parking on the site.

JESSE MISSION

Loads of labour was required to address all of the necessary preliminaries but the cost implications seemed fierce. We were told of an organisation called Jesse Mission, which availed labourers at manageable prices. These were formerly destitute people, who were recovering from assorted substance misuses. They lived at Jesse Mission, where they underwent rehabilitation, were accommodated and fed. During the day, they worked in teams, arriving early in the morning, tackling all sorts of tasks in tandem for the entire day. For a team of fourteen people, Jesse Mission would very reasonably ask for a contribution of approximately US\$ 70.

Where many of those from Jesse Mission were very accomplished tradesmen, the effects of their addictions were frequently still evident. There were many heavy tobacco smokers, drinking

excessive quantities of strong tea and coffee, and irritations and conflicts amongst them abounded. They were also not straight forward in how they performed their tasks and it was necessary that they had close supervision at all times.

THE FIRST CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the Hellenic College there had been three adjoining classrooms, separated by foldable partitions. The divisions would be removed to make one single, large room where a film would be screened or drama, performed. We thought that this place would be the most suitable in the building to use as a church, although it did not properly face east. It would serve the purpose for many years until the Lord would enable us to build a cathedral on the vast land that was available to us.

In 1992 and early '93 this church was very rudimentary, when a blessed deacon from Sydney, Morgan Morgan, who had been a friend of mine for many years in the service in Australia, paid a visit to Johannesburg. He brought to us some old curtains and veils, and also some icons that had been made by an amateur in Sydney. We fashioned a wooden altar and a temporary iconostasis from these materials. It was a very simple type of church until the Lord provided us with two carpenters, Joseph and Paul who came from Kenya. They spent six months (24/09/1993-10/03/1994) in completing a sound iconostasis, lecterns, a seat of the See of Saint Mark, and pews from the leftover school desks. They also assembled a beautifully carved mahogany altar, gifted from Cameroon by the late engineer, Gamil Bisada, God bless his soul, who was working in West Africa at the time.

The first liturgy was prayed in October 1992, using a transportable holy plate, while the first baptisms of members of African independent churches occurred January 3, 1993. Amongst them were an archbishop, three bishops and many priests and deacons.

Some, amidst those baptised, were later trained and taken to Egypt for ordination as priests of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

CONSECRATION OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

23rd January 1994, H.H. Pope Shenouda III consecrated the altar of the Saint Mark Church in Parkview, Johannesburg, with the participation of Metropolitan Yohanna Ibrahim from the Syrian Orthodox Church, Aram Keshishian the First, then Metropolitan from the Armenian Apostolic Church and now the Patriarch, Metropolitan Timotheos from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, H.G. (H.G.) Bishop Serapion- now Bishop of Los Angeles, and myself, the Bishop of African Affairs.

Such a blessed gathering of leaders and fathers from the Oriental Orthodox Church family does not happen frequently, and contributed to a great and glorious historical day for the consecration of the first Coptic Orthodox altar in southern Africa.

H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III

SOUTH AFRICAN VISITS- 1994, 1995, 1997

17 JANUARY 1994- 28 JANUARY 1994

18 January 1994 ✠ Epiphany liturgy at Saint Mark Church, Parkview, Johannesburg

23 January 1994 ✠ Consecration of the altar, icons and baptismal font of Saint Mark Church, Parkview, Johannesburg and divine liturgy

✠ Laying of foundation stone of Saint Mark Cathedral, Parkview, Johannesburg

H.H. decided to visit Zimbabwe for one night, consecrating the altar there. We also went to Dema Seke in Mashonaland East, where the foundation stones of the church and vocational training centre were laid. Father Bisenty was the responsible priest in Zimbabwe at that time. It was then decided that H.H. would travel to Lusaka, Zambia, and onwards to Nairobi, where he ordained Reverend Father Michael Aketch, as a priest. The following day he returned to Egypt, having visited four other African countries on this trip.

12 AUGUST 1995- 23 AUGUST 1995

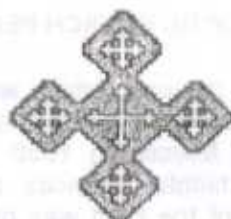
- 13 August 1995 ✠ Divine liturgy at Saint Mark Church, Parkview, Johannesburg
- 16 August 1995 ✠ Laying of the foundation stone of Saint Mark Church, Nongoma, KwaZulu Natal
- 19 August 1995 ✠ Consecration of the altar and baptismal font of Saint Mark Church, Guguletu, Cape Town
 ✠ Laying of the foundation stone of the Dr Moufeed Ragheb Vocational Training Centre, Guguletu, Cape Town
- 20 August 1995 ✠ Consecration of Saint Mark Church, Tumahole, Parys, Free State
- 22 August 1995 ✠ Divine liturgy, celebrating the feast of the Holy Virgin Saint Mary, Saint Mark Church, Parkview, Johannesburg

27 MARCH 1997- 8 APRIL 1997

- 28 March 1997 ✠ Consecration of Saint George Church, Soshanguve, Pretoria

- 29 March 1997 ✠ Consecration of Saint Paul Church, Vosloorus, Johannesburg
- 30 March 1997 ✠ Divine liturgy at Saint Mark Church, Parkview, Johannesburg and ordination of priest and deacons
- 31 March 1997 ✠ Consecration of Saint Mark Church, Nongoma, KwaZulu Natal and laying of the foundation stone of the Virgin Mary of Zeitoun Vocational Training Centre
- 6 April 1997 ✠ Consecration of Virgin Saint Mary Church, Tembisa, Johannesburg
- 6 April 1997 ✠ Inauguration of Dr Moufeed Ragheb Vocational Training Centre, Cape Town

Chapter Three



YOUR PEOPLE O, LORD

**“Through Blessings be
Thousands Upon Thousands,
Myriads Upon Myriads,
Fulfilling Your Will”**

The Divine Liturgy

THE WONDERFUL CO-ORDINATION OF THE ONE SPIRIT, LEADING AND WORKING WITH THE MISSION

THE LORD GIVES THE COPTIC CHURCH PEOPLES TO EVANGELISE

We had a very difficult mission, which was to revive the Coptic Orthodox Church that had been planted in South Africa. This was started by Metropolitan Morcos in 1950 and abandoned for 42 years, except for the faithful services of Rev. Simon Khobe. However, the good will of the Lord was planning a greater scope towards bigger congregations in the southern African region to pray with the Coptic liturgy, saying: "... but Your people, through blessings be thousands upon thousands, myriads upon myriads, fulfilling Your will."

The hand of the Lord opened a new dimension for the great, new South African service for the Coptic Orthodox Church, employing ways and means beyond man's planning and abilities.

THE AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

We never expected what the Lord was organising as the Spirit worked in the hearts of a group of independent church leaders from a South African church, named the African Orthodox Church. They had an Archbishop, named Simon Mhlonyane and Bishops Augustine Qatyana, Gladman Maqanda, Phillip Mabunda and Ambrose Nzuzo who discovered that they were living in a contrived situation. While they called themselves "orthodox", they were, in fact, practising Anglicans. They felt they loved orthodoxy and wanted to be orthodox but they did not know how to achieve this.

As they had been brought up in the Anglican tradition, their dress, uniforms, books of prayer and singing were totally Anglican. For them, there was little distinction in responsibilities of an archbishop,

bishop, priest or deacon. An archbishop may be someone whose jurisdiction is confined to a small parish in an isolated township. Their only meeting was on Sundays, convened in a house, garage or rented school classroom. Their preaching involved opening a local language Bible and delivering a fiery and explosive sermon, interspersed with frequent, roof-raising singing, drumming and African dancing. Rarely, they would take holy communion, adopting a very Protestant method of commemoration whereby they would offer a piece of bread from a loaf procured from the local grocery store, and a red drink from a juice bottle.

The pastors that accompanied the archbishop and bishops included Reverends Sambu, Gumede, Nzama, Makhalima, Mavundla, Kunene, Yazini, Valisa, Ben, Mojaelo and Mclabe. They had followed Archbishop Daniel William Alexander, the founder of the African Orthodox Church in southern and east Africa, who had been ordained by Archbishop William McGuire- the establisher of the African Orthodox Church in the USA (1921). The person who ordained Archbishop McGuire, had been ordained under false pretences and his ordination was nullified by the Syrian Jacobite Patriarch of Antioch in 1935.

The African Orthodox leadership sought affiliation with an apostolic, orthodox church to become credibly orthodox, as they were aware that their ordination had not come from a legitimate source. In short, they strove for a way to become apostolically canonised. They simultaneously identified the need to strengthen their church, financially, educationally, with training and overall spiritual upliftment. Their buildings were very limited or in a sad state of decline from lack of maintenance. Where there were no buildings, congregations met in garages, rooms of houses or in schoolrooms, rented for a few hours on Sundays.

The African Orthodox Church had laboured under the misapprehension that the Greek Orthodox Church would accept

them as sons and daughters of Christ For several years, they had tried knocking at the door of the Orthodox Church of Africa, as the Greek Orthodox Church confusingly referred to itself. They repeatedly discovered that the Greek Church intended to serve Greek nationals only, and firmly and consistently closed the door on mission amongst Africans. This was the case until a new group of mission and ecumenically minded leaders started missions in Kenya, Uganda, Ghana and Cameroon.

HOW WE GOT TO KNOW ABOUT THEM

Around the same time, an American priest of Russian descent from the Orthodox Church of America, Father Chrysostom Frank, came to lead a white, non-Greek orthodox church. He was married to a South African and had been invited by various orthodox South Africans of non-Greek descent, who did not find a home and acceptance amongst the Greek-speaking churches. They established the Saint Nicholas of Japan Orthodox Church in Brixton, Johannesburg, and prayed in English.

While teaching theology at the University of South Africa (UNISA), Father Chrysostom came to hear that the Coptic Orthodox Church had come to South Africa and had bought a school in Parkview. He came to our building without appointment, not knowing how to contact us otherwise. Unable to attract our attention from deep inside the building, Father Chrysostom leapt over the fence to enter the building. Unexpectedly, we found an orthodox priest in front of us saying: "Coptic people you are back! Welcome and most welcome! I am thrilled that the Coptic Church is here! We know very well that the Coptic Church is going to be loving and friendly to us because we know what a Coptic Church is."

Father Chrysostom cordially introduced himself, inviting us to visit the Saint Nicholas of Japan Church in Brixton, and to have frequent fellowship with him. We visited the Church and his home, and

participated in spiritual meetings that he held for his congregants in the evenings, on occasions delivering the Sunday liturgy sermon to his congregation.

O' LORD: THAT IS WHY YOU SENT US HERE

Early November 1992, Father Chrysostom came to me and explained that there was a big African Orthodox Church that was on the verge of demise due to spiritual and institutional weakness. He advised that the constituent parishes' leadership of this Church were all gathering to study where they could go to obtain affiliation, 28 November, 1992 in Tumahole, Parys, Orange Free State at the house of Father Makhalima. Their choice of representation would be to either the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria, through **Patriarch Parthenos**, or to the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria, through **Pope Shenouda**. Father Chrysostom asked whether I would be interested to speak to those pastors in Parys. I praised the Lord, lifting my heart to thank Him for such an unexpected and great opportunity. I responded to Father Chrysostom joyfully: "That is why we are here!"

Further, I suggested to Father Chrysostom that the African Orthodox Church secretary, Reverend Melumzi Sambu (Port Elizabeth) and Archbishop Simon Mhlonyane (Vosloorus), should call me to make arrangements. They did so, and I agreed that we should go.

At that time, I had two people staying with me: Sherif, a young Egyptian on holidays from Kenya, and a visiting deacon, Samih Yowakim. I found Deacon Samih in Cairo, expressing his admiration for the service in Africa, and invited him to come with us and be introduced to the service of the mission in Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa.

AN IMPORTANT HISTORICAL MEETING WITH THE AFRICAN INDEPENDENT ORTHODOX CHURCH

28 November 1992, leaving Johannesburg for the first time, I drove the small second-hand Toyota car, with Sherif and Deacon Samih, for one and a half hours to Parys (Orange Free State), where Father Melumzi Sambu directed us to the house of Father Makhalima in the neighbouring township of Tumahole.

FEELINGS OF DOUBT AND FEAR

There, eighteen men dressed in black and a few women with their palpable feelings of apprehension and doubt received me. These were soon dispelled. I greeted them warmly, speaking positively about the meeting.

THE CHANGE OF ATMOSPHERE AND WELCOME

I explained to them, from the Bible, that the Coptic Church is the Mother Church in Africa, and in the world; how the altar of the Lord in Egypt was prophesied: *In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border* (Isaiah 19:19). Further, I spoke about the patriarchs from the Old Testament who came to Egypt, including Moses, the holy family and Saint Mark, the African apostle who established the Church in Alexandria and watered it by his blood in 42 AD.

I told them of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia and now, South Africa. A personal glimpse of our mission work outside Egypt followed, including nine years in Ethiopia and delineating how great our interest was to lift up the African churches to the true orthodox way. It was a fasting day, and our hosts had provided non-fasting food from which we refrained. We explained what fasting meant and why we fasted- it was the advent fasting-, and that orthodoxy greatly respects prayer and

fasting. We spent from 9a.m.- 4 p.m. discussing the finest details, including respect for culture, ethnicity and race. We were mutually satisfied with the meeting. I believe that Deacon Samih (now Bishop Paul the Bishop of Mission Affairs) would still remember this historical occasion that brought a large African Orthodox Church into the true way of orthodoxy and apostolicity.

THE ARRIVAL OF FATHER CHRYSOSTOM FRANK

At 4 pm, we found Father Chrysostom Frank before us in Parys. He had driven this great distance to tell the African Orthodox leadership that they should choose to join the Coptic Orthodox Church. He said: "The Coptic Orthodox will love and serve you without limits, in real sacrifice... The Coptic Orthodox Church is the true African Church, it is not at all a European Church."

A DISPLAY OF THE MISSION IN KENYA

Having carried a borrowed video player from Mr Jack Erian- the first Copt we met in Johannesburg- I showed them a tape of the service in Kenya and Zimbabwe, including the ordination of Kenyan priests, with footage of Kenyans praying the liturgy in their vernaculars. They were all thrilled, and started to say: "We have decided to join the Coptic Orthodox Church!" However, I asked them not to take a hasty decision, but to take all of this information to their congregations, mothers' unions, youth groups and various branches all over the country, and to meet with us again in our new headquarters in Parkview at the end of December 1992. Then, I intended that we should spend several days with lectures, videos, discussions, illustrating orthodoxy with practical experience of the sacraments. We agreed that they would bring mothers to prepare meals and we would provide the food. With great jubilation, they accepted this invitation.

THE AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Independence within the Church in Africa started, 1859, in Ghana, West Africa, afterwards spreading throughout the continent. It was a response to colonialists' great oppression of African people, accompanying gross exploitation of indigenous natural resources. South Africa lived longest under such domination- approximately three and a half centuries of political, social and economic greed had tyrannised Africans.

Due to the wealth of South Africa, especially in minerals such as gold and diamonds, the colonialist pillage was immense, leaving the African with widespread poverty and little formal education. At one time in South Africa, there had been more than five thousand African independent churches, as a direct reaction to colonialism and apartheid. Some of these even used the name "Coptic", knowing that this was an ancient, apostolic church from Alexandria, established through an African apostle- Saint Mark. They sought a true African theology.

SAINT JOHN APOSTOLIC COPTIC CHURCH

Others, such as Archbishop Mzimkulu Marwana (Mdudu) of the Saint John's Apostolic Coptic Church in South Africa tell unique stories of how they became acquainted with, and adopted the "Coptic" name. He describes serial visions: 1) 1988, while sleeping, an angel appeared to him declaring: "I am the Coptic. You should establish a church in this name." After this, he and his followers obtained a book of Coptic Church history. Noting the word "Coptic", they longed to see a Coptic Orthodox Church. 2) In 1993, 'a prophetic, Mother Nku, appeared with the Coptic angel, showing paragraph five of the Constitution of the Prophets- "Remember my servant Saint John (the Baptist)" '. This was perceived as a revelation to name a church the Saint John Apostolic Coptic Church.

3) 1996, while at a taxi rank he envisioned: "a Coptic taxi full of Coptic travelling to Cape Town." 4) September 2001 in Klerksdorp: "There were three men from Egypt on camels on their way to Cape Town." Resulting from this vision, he decided "there must be a Coptic in Cape Town" and travelled to Cape Town to investigate. Through a local Bishop he learned of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Guguletu (Cape Town) although Father Sambu, the parish priest, was travelling. He phoned Father Sambu, and subsequently, I had contact with the Archbishop.

In December 2001, Archbishop Mdudu of the Saint John's Apostolic Coptic Church described responsibility of five bishops and ten priests, ordained with application of olive oil, practising healing by water and the laying of hands. He reported congregations in three South African provinces: in King Williams Town- Tilvil location and Blybach, East London- Duncan, Mtanzana (2), Chalomna location, Umtata, Grahamstown, Zwile (Port Elizabeth), K.T.C. Cape Town, Klerksdorp (3), and Bekkersdal.

THE AFRICAN ORTHODOX PEOPLE

Most of the followers of the African Orthodox Church lived in "black" townships in impoverished situations. We found members living under cardboard, plastic and rusty corrugated iron in temporary dwellings. Some were employed as underpaid professionals, government employees and casual workers but many more were uneducated, unskilled, unemployed and underdeveloped. They formed an African independent church, with leaders of different parishes being someone who could read and possessed a copy of the Holy Bible in the relevant vernacular. On Sundays, he gathered the people to receive some preaching, sing and meet in uniforms, giving them a collective identity. There is no objection to referring to him by the names he has probably first given himself, like "prophet," "Messiah," "archbishop", "apostle" etc

THE LEADERS OF THE AFRICAN ORTHODOX INDEPENDENT CHURCH

The leader was self-made, with a non-Biblical ordination, generally reflecting the level of spiritual immaturity of the followers. One self-made archbishop explained to me the process by which he had become an archbishop: 'I woke in the morning, hearing a voice whispering, "Archbishop, archbishop, you are an archbishop." I negotiated with this voice and knew that this was a call from heaven and that I should be an archbishop. I went on Sunday to my congregation and told them about the voice, declaring that I should be an archbishop. They received this information with great joy, dancing and clapping.' I questioned him further, inquiring about the details of his ordination, as there was no apostolic succession, that is, any involvement of another archbishop or patriarch in this ordination. He explained his invention: 'The congregation was invited to stand with arms raised and in two rows facing each other, outside the mud house that was used as a church. As I passed through them, the two rows arms touched, and each person was asked to say: "Archbishop, archbishop, archbishop!" until I had passed through all of the people.' He had gone in one end as a layman, and emerged as an archbishop, with everyone congratulating him on his ordination. This was a complete misunderstanding of the verses from the book of Acts, in which we are told the apostles prayed and fasted and laid hands, depicting succession from the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, another African leader told me that when he was walking on the mountain for prayer he heard a voice coming from a rock. It said: "Prophecy for my people! Prophecy for my people! You are the prophet and people are waiting for a prophecy from your mouth. Don't deprive them of the work of the Holy Spirit through you." Hence, he proclaimed himself a prophet and his follower identified closely with him as a "black, African prophet."

The low-level, theological starting point meant that a huge effort was needed to uplift the African independent churches to the richness of the Coptic Orthodox Church with her two thousand years of theology and spirituality.

THE JOY OF THE AFRICANS WITH THE GIFT OF GOD

Thursday 31 December 1992, eighteen men- the leadership of the African Orthodox Church in South Africa- came to Parkview to spend some days. Three women, called in to assist with the catering, accompanied them. As well, Mr Simon Khobe, his wife and some elders, deacons and sons came from the Coptic Orthodox Church from Natal. Both of these groups were meeting each other for the first time.

Mr Khobe explained his great joy in the return of the Coptic Orthodox Church to South Africa after forty-two years of absence. During this period he had continually prayed for the Lord to grant the Church a property, to be established as a Coptic Orthodox South African headquarters. He confessed that his prayers were answered beyond measure, and his experiences with the work of God.

All gathered outside the old school building, then walked around scrutinising the vast land and great facilities, admiring the huge potential for development and expansion. Spontaneously they erupted joyfully into song, praising the Lord in many African languages- "Thank you Jesus" in a melodious African tune, successively in Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa, Shona, KiSwahili, Luo, KiKamba, KiKuyu, KiLuhya...: Siyabonga Jesu, Kea Leboha Jeso, Siyabulela Jesu, Asanti Sana Jesu, Shakanaka Jesu, Nekotheouo Jesu, Ero Ka Manu Jesu, Nekwega Jesu, Embwo Mno Jesu...

I followed them as they walked energetically clapping, beating the floors and singing at the tops of their voices, while the great expectations, of past generations and those to come, for a true

orthodox, holy and apostolic Church, resonated.

STARTING OUR MISSION WITH THE AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

We had hastily purchased mattresses, blankets and various other items for the use of our guests, and I had equipped myself with a large water tank that could, if necessary, be used as a baptismal font.

It was difficult to know what would be required to meet the needs of our guests, so I prepared myself as much as possible. I examined the situation and studied the whole atmosphere, as the leaders of the church were quite elderly-some being in their mid-seventies. Our mission seemed that it would definitely be more difficult starting with an older leadership, and in the future, through the grace of God, we hoped to draw it from a much more youthful pool.

PRESENTING THE CHURCH SACRAMENTS AND EXPERIENCING ITS EFFECTS

On the last Thursday of December 1992, we made the first sacrament ever practised for them- the unction of the sick. I had English books, brought from Kenya, and we all shared in the prayers and readings. We prepared cotton reeds with oil, and I explained the Biblical foundation of this fifth of the seven sacraments of the Church. I did not pray the final absolutions on the oil because they are designed for those who have been baptised in the Church. After completion of the prayers, I painted them all with oil and the Lord blessed us with His power. One amongst them, known as Reverend Gumede, for many years complained of a painful right knee that could never be extended. He asked me to paint it with the oil and after this, he was able to fully extend the knee pain-free. With that, a woman cried: "I am healed!", followed by another man, claiming the same. All started to beat the floor and

dance in praise of our Lord, professing their belief in the healing powers of the oil and the sacraments of the Church that is clearly led by the Holy Spirit. This boosted their morale greatly, and again they continued to ask for affiliation with the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Friday was a day of lectures, with Father Chrysostom Frank and Deacon Samih Yowakim participating as well, and a series of videos on the sacraments were presented.

AN HISTORICAL VESPERS RAISING THE INCENSE

Saturday, after raising the vespers incense, we brought a detailed explanation of the liturgy, which would be prayed on Sunday in the true orthodox way. I, with Deacon Samih, would serve at the altar during this liturgy but the African Orthodox, were invited to observe only. Reverend Mhlonyane, the Archbishop, asked about sharing in the holy communion. I responded: "If you want to share in holy communion, you must enter the Church by the door. Yes, you are called African *Orthodox* but practically you are not orthodox." I explained to him that most of their so-called "orthodox" practices were fully Anglican. He inquired: "What do you mean by entering the Church by the door?"

SETTING NOMINAL ORTHODOXY STRAIGHT

I asked about their baptisms, and he explained that all had been baptised in the Protestant churches and the mechanisms varied from church to church, from sprinkling with water to symbolic sprinkling. None had been baptised by full immersion. I then explained what was required to validate a baptism in the orthodox Church and render it sacramental:

- 0. The priest who performs the baptism should be apostolically ordained and trained to perform the sacrament

- ◊ A particular order of prayer and accompanying activities are applicable to orthodox baptism- a) praying on the water because that water becomes the Water and the Spirit, which are mentioned in John 3 b) three holy oils are applied to the water, ensuring the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the water c) the catechumen is fully immersed in the water, as he/ she is buried with our Lord Jesus Christ in baptism, dying with Him in the baptism and rising with Him in the new Life.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO BE TRUE ORTHODOX?

They accepted this very well and I added: 'Accordingly, you should enter the Church from the door and not by the window; not via a title or name called "orthodox" but through practical actions and the sacrament.' Further, I explained the necessity to precede baptism with full confession of the sins of the past, and absolution should be given. At the time of baptism, everyone should denounce the devil and his powers and confess the Lord Jesus Christ.

WE ARE IN YOUR HANDS; DO WHAT YOU SEE FIT

The archbishop declared: "We are in your hands. We are willing to do whatever you say to be admitted into the orthodox Church, become affiliated and canonised." I elaborated: "Another important thing to consider is that once baptised in the orthodox Church, an archbishop or bishop or priests or deacons of the African Orthodox Church can never retain this rank or any rank of priesthood because all bishops in the Coptic Orthodox Church have taken vows of celibacy, and do not marry. As all of you are married, there is no chance of any being considered a bishop. You will become laymen, and later we can ordain you as deacons. When you have received the true discipleship of the orthodox Church, later we may ordain you as priests and you can be canonised in your priesthood."

THE HEAVENLY NOT THE EARTHLY WILL; THE DIVINE NOT THE HUMAN

Everyone applauded, yet I was not still very comfortable. I asked myself whether I was taking a hasty decision and perhaps getting emotional because of the opportunity that seemed to be presenting for affiliation. Was I taking the proper steps towards the faithful practice of our tradition, dogma and our sacraments? What was the rush? With these thoughts racing through my mind, I went into my room, knelt down and prostrated before my Lord, seeking His guidance, blessing and inspiration. I soon felt a real comfort, remembering that Africans are usually much attached to rank and would not accept to relinquish their positions as archbishop, bishops and priests to become laymen, if they were not wholehearted in their approach. This genuine quest to become orthodox in the full sense was highly admirable.

YOUR BAPTISM WILL BE EARLY TOMORROW MORNING

Emerging from my room, I informed the African Orthodox leadership: "I accept your request to be admitted into the Church through that holy door, which is the work of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of baptism."

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

I continued: "Now, I have to take each of you into the office, one by one, to hear your confessions and pray the absolution. Tomorrow, at six a.m. we shall pray on the water of baptism and baptise those of you who are ready for baptism and given the second sacrament of Chrismation. Afterwards, when we pray the liturgy you will be given the holy communion." I explained the logistics of the baptism, the liturgy and the holy communion. They were very happy that they would be admitted into the fold of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Confessions continued until the early hours of Sunday.

3 JANUARY 1993- AN HISTORICAL DAY

At 6a.m. on Sunday, all of the men were gathered around the baptismal font with great enthusiasm and anticipation of the expected change in their worship and service lives. It was envisaged that the women, after further education, would likely be baptised together with other mothers of the Church. We prayed the liturgy in English, Sherif and Samih served as deacons, and I allowed those newly baptised members to all stand very near, around the altar. They took the holy communion for the first time, in the true sense from the orthodox Church of Africa, through the apostolic succession of Saint Mark. What a joyful, blessed occasion! I felt assuredly that this had been approached appropriately, with soundly established foundations, without any haste or dishonour to the sacraments of the Church and the action of the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with the tradition of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

FAITHFUL DAUGHTERS AND SONS OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THEIR SUPPORT OF THE EVANGELISTIC SERVICES

Dr Nabil Nakhla and his wife, Mediha, lived with us in Nairobi, Kenya, for many years. They shared much and in many ways in the progress and needs of the mission. May the Lord reward them with the heavenly, instead of the earthly.

Our Lord's good will planned that Dr Nabil and Mediha were present in Johannesburg for a visit to attend the Saturday evening and Sunday events. They witnessed the presence of the Lord in those moments of the practical affiliation of the African Orthodox Church into the Coptic Orthodox Church through the canonical way of the sacraments.

They videotaped the whole sequence of events, while none other of

us had neither mind nor thought of that.¹

AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH TOWARDS COMPATIBILITY WITH THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

In the afternoon, we examined the constitution of the African Orthodox Church, reconciling it with the constitution of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Before their return home, the African Orthodox Church wrote a letter to H.H. Pope Shenouda III requesting their affiliation with the Coptic Orthodox Church. The newly formulated committee signed the letter, having reverted to their original lay names. In January 1993, I carried a full, written report of the whole situation to H.H. in Cairo, seeking his blessings and approval for affiliation.

THE PLAN OF ACTION

The plan of action for commencement of work with this African Orthodox Church was to visit their nine parishes throughout South Africa. These were in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Durban, Parys, Vosloorus, Tembisa, Soshanguve, Makapanstaad and GaRankuwa.

Many of those were very small parishes, rapidly diminishing due to lack of leadership and education. We intended to introduce the Coptic Orthodox Church, with the concept of apostolicity through Saint Mark, and prepare the people for baptism. Special attention was paid to the old leadership, to put their congregations squarely on the path of discipline, education, learning and training to grow new leadership.

¹ Refer Annex for Dr Nabil's letter

TAKING THE BLESSINGS OF THE SUCCESSOR OF SAINT MARK

At the end of January 1993, I travelled to Egypt, especially to take the blessings of H.H. He studied all the documents, applications and procedures followed well and gave me his blessings for affiliation and the outlined plan for the remainder of 1993. The African Orthodox Church that affiliated eventually became known as the African (Coptic) Orthodox Church.

THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF SOUTH AFRICA

Simon Khobe shouldered the main responsibility, of the Coptic Orthodox Church that was served by Metropolitan Morcos 1950-1951. He left his job and made himself a full-time Church servant, travelling all around holding the flag of the Coptic Orthodox Church high. For forty-two years Reverend Simon Khobe kept the Church in South Africa alive due to his deep faith and his conviction that the Coptic Orthodox is the true Mother Church of Africa.

Part of our planning was to revive the Coptic Orthodox Church in South Africa and to correct "all the situations, which were not according to the sacraments of the Church", as Simon Khobe phrased it. He said: "I tried to keep the Coptic Orthodox Church alive by baptising, preaching and performing weddings, funerals and service for the people. Please come and correct all these things because I know that I was not ordained, and was not the person to perform these sacraments." Simon Khobe, now Reverend Father Morcos Khobe, is such a very transparent individual, characterised in his honest testimony to us of his forty-two year service.

Father Morcos Khobe, with his wife- Michal, son- Paul, and his long-term deacon- Paul Moloi, were present to see the baptism and affiliation of the African Orthodox Church, January 3, 1993.

In 1992, the main Coptic Orthodox congregation was in Nongoma, KwaZulu Natal, about 550 kilometres south east of Johannesburg. Others were in Mvunyane, Mashabatini near the Swaziland border, Daveyton, Soweto, Sebokeng and various other places, where pockets of people continued to appreciate the Church from a distance only, due to lack of service. However, the level of spirituality of those of the Coptic Orthodox Church was at a significantly higher level than that of the African (Coptic) Orthodox congregations, being in touch- even at a distance- with the Mother Church.

With the planned revival of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and the growth and development of the African (Coptic) Orthodox Church our work ahead was inarguably hefty. We praised God that He gave us two groups of people with whom to work and launch a very big expansion of the Coptic Orthodox Church in South Africa.

DIVISION AMONG THE LEADERSHIP, SUB-LEADERSHIP AND CONGREGATIONS OF THE AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

From long experience, those who are not well steeped in theology, faith and the knowledge of the Word of God and the Bible, tend to factionalise and create political divisions due to insufficient understanding and wisdom.

The news was spreading in 1993, amongst all the African Orthodox branches in South Africa, about the request for affiliation with the Coptic Orthodox Church. In spite of reiterated explanations of the Church's apostolicity and her nature as a true African church, some became exceedingly anxious that they would lose their African identity and rejected the notion of affiliation. Even some of those leaders who had been baptised with the first group of eighteen, were swayed by the doubts of their congregations.

I attempted to reassure that affiliation did not mean loss or retention of the African Orthodox name and identity, as a title was irrelevant to the truths of the Church. I again emphasised the importance of putting the Church right, on the orthodox way of life, teaching and discipline. One from Port Elizabeth was insistent that African identity would be lost. He rejected the whole affiliation idea, denying that he had become a member of the Coptic Orthodox Church through baptism and breaking away with six elderly congregants. Reverend Melumzi Sambu with an African (Coptic) Orthodox congregation well prepared approximately one hundred people who were baptised in a tank in a Zwile school classroom.

Frequently, I flew to Port Elizabeth to pray the liturgy and teach. During this time, one pastor from the African Orthodox congregation had claimed the use of the African Orthodox Church building and land in KwaZeele, conducting Sunday services for about five people. Apparently other African Orthodox leaders made huge efforts to persuade him that the affiliation was designed to uplift, but he remained adamant in his rejection. To this day, the land is neglected and the now-derelict building is seldom used. A fairly recent offer from the Coptic Orthodox Church to establish, on the site, a vocational training centre for socio-economic upliftment was similarly ignored.

SCHISMATIC MOTIVES

Other leaders of the African Orthodox Church had some schismatic motives, concealed completely from us, and the main African Orthodox Church as well. In Durban, for example, one elderly pastor, with some from other branches, proposed affiliation but, in fact, was ignoring his own elders and brother pastors of the former African Orthodox Church. This appeared only after many years, that he was not in favour of the Coptic Orthodox Church and really sought to sabotage some activities, in spite of having been ordained as a priest in 1994 with the other six priests in Cairo. In Soshanguve

too, there was a pastor, not a member of the African Orthodox, who had his own "Anglican Orthodox Catholic Church"- a very odd name indeed. When he approached the African Orthodox for membership, he was accepted without their having any real idea of his or his church's background. He was baptised with the group of eighteen, in January 1993, and seemed to be at his best with the support of his very pious and staunch wife. Several years later, after the departure from this world of his wife, this inadequate history emerged, while the priests were voicing their collective regret that he had ever been admitted to the African Orthodox Church, deciding to suspend him from priesthood due to serious incidents that occurred.

In 1993, one pastor was working as a driver with "Nissan", another as a project officer with "World Vision" and, another was employed with the Ministry of Education, while the remainder were all pensioners.

All of the African Orthodox Churches had assigned pastors, except Cape Town, which was a large church being maintained by the widow of the bishop who had built it. Unfortunately, it was really a church in decline.

GREAT DIFFICULTY IN TRAINING THE AFRICAN ORTHODOX LEADERS

We made a 1993 program, comprising visits to the parishes and branches all over the country, teaching people and preparing them for baptism. Also, we concentrated on bringing all of the leaders to Parkview, fortnightly or monthly for a long weekend, preparing them for leadership and priesthood. As they were brought up in an African Orthodox Church that had been following an Anglican tradition, with ready-made prayer and songbooks and uniforms, they had become very much accustomed to a superficial spirituality. It seemed that if something had already been "cooked", they used it- no deep dogma or theology, or understanding or history. They appeared to have

become used to a formula in their lives that placed spirituality well down the list of priorities. Of greater importance to them seemed their own "fleshy" lives, like television, radio and all sorts of entertainment, allowing only a few hours every week for anything spiritual.

Our teaching of preparation for the orthodox priesthood was arduous and necessarily slow. They took a long time to learn and be convinced. This may have been due to the age of most of the leaders (60-70 years), their comprehension, ability to concentrate and fluency in English, although most appeared to speak this quite adequately. A few needed translation into English. It would be possible to give several teaching sessions on subjects, such as priesthood, service of God, pastoral care, but invariably some participants would sleep through it. Some even snored, invoking the elbows of their neighbours! At the end of a lecture on a very deep subject, some appeared to visibly revert to the most superficial level imaginable. For example, a raised hand for a question: "What do you think of the colour of the church women's uniforms?" Sometimes, it all seemed too difficult for a few to comprehend.

Considerable time was spent in training for the liturgy, encouraging their service as deacons. While it was greatly simplified, often it was clearly beyond capacities. During this time, I was continually travelling, preparing, teaching, lecturing and guiding. The visiting deacon Samih, had the use of a car and travelled to prepare congregants for baptism. The Holy Week of Passion in 1993 was a big chance to enable all to spend more than eight days at Parkview, to introduce them to the system of prayers. We ensured the translation of most prayers into Zulu and Xhosa, and they shared in the readings in the languages of their greatest ease, participating also in fasting. This close contact with the tradition and rites of the Coptic Orthodox Church was a period that they seemed to enjoy immensely.



**28/11/1992- IN THE HOUSE OF REV. FR ATHANASIOS MAKHALIMA
WITH LEADERS OF THE AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH- REV. FR
CHRYSTOM FRANK APPEARS**



**03/01/1993- AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH LEADERS IN PARKVIEW
CHURCH DURING ADMINISTRATION OF SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM &
CONFIRMATION. DEACON SAMIH YOWAKIM (H.G. BISHOP PAUL) &
ENGINEER LABIB FARAG HANNA APPEAR**

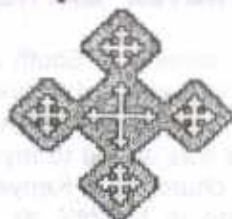


**AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH LEADERS DENOUNCING THE DEVIL
BEFORE IMMERSION IN BAPTISM**



**1 ½ YEARS AFTER THEIR BAPTISM, AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
LEADERS IN THE LITURGY OF THEIR ORDINATION AS CANONICAL
COPTIC ORTHODOX PRIESTS BY THE HANDS OF H.H. POPE
SHENOUDA III & MINE, IN CAIRO PAPAL RESIDENCE 28/06/1994**

Chapter Four



THE LABOURERS AND THE HARVEST

The Importance of the Choice and

Discipleship in the Mission Field

"Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest" MATTHEW 9:38

As I was the only priest serving in South Africa, I had to pray the liturgies and render all sacramental services, while teaching and instructing newcomers from the African Orthodox and Coptic Orthodox Churches. This was added to my responsibilities of caring for the mission in twelve churches in Kenya, where Father Antonius Kamal Halim was serving in Nairobi, as well as the services in Lusaka, Zambia and Harare, Zimbabwe, where Fathers Roufail Wassef and Sourial Yusuf were respectively assigned. Father Sourial was waiting for a replacement to enable him to leave for Sydney, Australia, and I had to periodically service people in Windhoek, Namibia where there was no priest.

I felt a need for a young, strong priest who could assist with the service, so the Johannesburg Church could be kept open at all times while I travelled to the other countries that were part of my duties, and the education of new priests and deacons could be ongoing.

As usual, I put such a need in the Lord's hands, as I know He always answers.

GOD'S PLAN

January 1993 was the month when we started to have hope in identifying a dedicated servant who was equipped with the English language and was prepared to carry the Cross, with me, in the new and specialised field of mission in South Africa. Doctor Farouk Awadalla, with his wife Trevina and their child, Michael, arrived to be introduced to the South African services, to the residence where they might live while serving, to survey the prospects for schooling for their three other children and to actually see the people that he might be serving. Such was the directive of H. H. Pope Shenouda

who requested that Farouk examine the circumstances and write him a letter if he were to accept the situation. H.H. blessed the principle of Farouk's ordination for South Africa, at the same time sanctioning the Zimbabwean secondment of Father Bisenty Abdel Messih, who had served in Ottawa, Canada for five years, and would replace Father Sourial after his move to Australia.

THE SON OF THE EGYPTIAN RURAL VILLAGE WHO BECAME A MISSIONARY PRIEST

June 1992, I was invited by Fathers Bishoy Isaac and Roufail Nahla to speak about "mission", at a church conference in Montreal, Canada. There, I found one of my sons, born on my hands in the rural village of Abu Zabaal El Ballad, where I served from the early 1950s to 1966 when I left for Ethiopia. His name was Deacon Doctor Farouk Tawfik, who finished his undergraduate science degree in Egypt, and studied his masters and doctorate in geology and chemistry in Canada, becoming a highly qualified employee of the Canadian Government. I was delighted to again meet Farouk, with his wife and four children, who had relocated to Canada and become Canadian citizens.

I noticed his accomplished command of English of the Bible and spiritual terms; that he was conversant with serving in the English language. He told me that he wished to consecrate his life to the Lord, hoping to return to Abu Zabaal El Ballad- the village of his birth to serve the Lord and his people. I asked him, with his gift for languages plus invaluable, transcultural experience as a migrant, why he wouldn't consider coming to South Africa to serve the Lord, as there was great need and a similarly great shortage of well equipped human resources. We discussed that most would prefer to live in Canada, the United States, Europe or Australia but few would care to serve in Africa. I advised him that if he were interested to serve with me in South Africa, after discussing the service with his wife, I would work very hard for his ordination as a priest.

He responded that he and his wife were highly convinced that I was in great need of someone to stand next to me in South Africa, and he would do his best to come and serve with me in the mission field, due to the profound and spiritual son-father relationship we had shared since the early 1950s.

For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
MATTHEW 6:32

I presented the case of my need for a priest, and the candidates, to H.H. Pope Shenouda in the season of the Feast of the Pentecost in 1992. H.H. had blessed these steps and now asked that Deacon Farouk meet him personally on any possible occasion. Father Morcos Morcos, from the Saint Mark Church in Toronto Canada, who had always supported the mission service, managed to fix an appointment for Deacon Farouk to have an audience with H.H. before the end of the year in Toronto.

At the meeting with Farouk, H.H. became aware that he was steadfast in consecrating his life for the sake of the mission. Farouk declined an offer to serve in the lands of immigration, after which H.H. instructed him to organise a preliminary surveillance visit to South Africa. As mentioned, this occurred in January 1993. As well as the investigation of his domestic and family circumstances, Farouk visited all nine branches of the Church that had recently been established. Furthermore, he went to some branches of the Coptic Orthodox Church that had existed in the early 1950s.

Farouk's acceptance letter to H.H. clearly stated his confirmation of acceptance to be consecrated for the service in Africa for the great need of the mission field, and his preparedness to resign his very successful position in the Canadian Government.

THE ORDINATION OF FATHER JOHANNES TO BE THE FIRST COPTIC PRIEST IN SOUTH AFRICA

Deacon Farouk and I went through numerous temptations and trials before ordination was possible. Through the blessings and absolution of H.H. Pope Shenouda III, his ordination was officiated by me, 13 November 1993, in the small church under the great cathedral of Anba Ruweiss in Cairo with the participation of H.G Bishop Samuel, the Bishop of Shebeen el Kanater and Abu-Zaabal El Ballad. I chose the ordination name of Johannes as he would be serving in Johannesburg and this would be easy for the South Africans to recognise and pronounce. Father Johannes spent the forty days of retreat after his ordination in the Saint Mina Monastery, where he was trained and instructed to pray the Coptic liturgy. Subsequently, he travelled to South Africa with his wife, Trevina, and children- Mina, Mark, Lydia and Michael- to settle in Johannesburg, 25 December 1993.

In the following Saturday evening vespers, we completed the rites of the enthronement of the priest on his new service in Africa.

The joy of everybody was immense, as they felt, from the first day, Father Johannes' kind heart, great love and willingness to serve others, giving without limits, toiling diligently as he felt the blessings of the Lord.

Father Johannes served in the South African mission field for five years from 25 December 1993 until October 1998, when he was forced to return to Canada for his children's tertiary education in Canadian universities as Canadian citizens. However, he maintains that he would have been content to serve in the African mission field all the days of his life had his children's education not dictated his return to Canada. He and his wife reiterate their hope to return to the African mission field once their children's education is complete and they become independent.

ATTRIBUTES OF THE EGYPTIAN, COPTIC ORTHODOX SERVANTS IN THE MISSION FIELD

We thank the Lord that he has given us existence at this great Church revival time, when, through the power of God, the Coptic Orthodox Church is expanding to multidirectional dimensions that have never been known before in the entire history of the world. During the blessed papacy of H.H. Pope Shenouda III, which is in its thirty-second year- may the Lord give him longer life to complete his leadership- there has been greatly escalated provision for the evangelistic service with financial and human resources, and spiritual and moral support.

We know that evangelism does not constitute a small part of the spiritual responsibility within the Church; rather it is its pillar, backbone and foundation. H.H. was further aware that the mission service is highly specialised, much beyond that of the pastoral service, necessitating dedicated and appropriately equipped servants. 13 June 1976, he established the Bishopric of African Affairs to devote great energy and abilities to teach and lead in calling all African people to the Christian orthodox way, preparing them for baptism to be united in the one, universal, holy, apostolic and orthodox Church.

The mother Coptic Church has given servants according to her abilities. Firstly there were predominantly monks and then came the married priests with their families. Those who have contributed highly notable service have had the following characteristics:

- ◊ In Egypt, they learned European languages in their childhoods- English or French- or before they were chosen to serve in foreign countries.
- ◊ They lived and served in the lands of immigration and their language skills improved tremendously.

- ◊ They shared a great desire to spread the gospel plus their love of evangelism enabled them to fully understand the needs of the mission, giving them an impetus for language fluency- not only the European languages but the vernaculars such as KiSwahili, Amharic and Zulu.
- ◊ They had a capacity to cross cultural barriers and become locally acclimatised. Saint Paul expresses his willingness to set aside everything that he is familiar with, from the culture in which he was raised, for the sake of winning more souls for the kingdom of God: ... *For though I am free from all [men], I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those [who] [are] under the law, as under the law, that I might win those [who] [are] under the law; to those [who] [are] without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those [who] [are] toward Christ, that I might win those [who] [are] without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all [men], that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with [you].* (1 Corinthians 9:16-23)

CROSSING THE CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

As effective mission necessarily traverses cultural boundaries, so Father Johannes Awadalla, in South Africa, quickly acclimatised to the local cultures, due to the simplicity of his heart, and his preparedness to embrace cultural diversity. He also made efforts to communicate in vernacular languages, for as H.H. Pope Shenouda advised me in 1966: "Learn the language of the people; you will win their hearts."

Our Lord Jesus has also warned us to wait for "power from above"

before going for evangelism, otherwise all efforts without the Holy Spirit will be "a lifeless body", "spiritless corpse", "as sounding brass" or "a clanging cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). The power that was taken in the day of the Pentecost, equipped them with courage, endurance, boldness, the readiness to sacrifice more and work very hard, to refrain from caring for the ego- as the Lord washed the feet of the disciples and asked them to wash each others, to be equipped and convinced of the importance of the mission.

LEARNING NEW LANGUAGES

The Lord has given His apostles the gift of tongues, or languages, by which they can carry spiritual feelings straight from the heart of the servant directly to the heart of the catechumen who can hear, follow and accept the Word of the Bible. In the day of the Pentecost, nineteen new tongues were gifted, covering the needs of the mission in the well-known world at that time.

A DEFINITION OF CULTURE

Culture is all learned behaviour that is socially acquired. It consists of the material and non-material traits that are passed on from one generation to another. They are both accumulative and transmittable- by society but not genetically.

There is no culture without society, whilst there may be societies without culture. Culture is a way of thinking, acting and reacting but it is not visible- only its manifestations can be seen. These are generally things made or used by people (objects) or peoples' sayings and doings (actions). Culture develops from abstractions of objects and actions into an identifiable and distinctive pattern of behaviour.¹

¹Nida, Eugene A., *Customs and Cultures* (Harper & Brothers, 1954), pp 29-30

A successful evangelist knows how to be in harmony with the culture of a new society. He should not accept aspects of a culture that conflict with the Word of God, the tradition or canonical laws of the Church. Similarly, he should never say "no" to any culture that is not in conflict with the words of the Bible.

EQUIPPING THE MISSIONARY

A well -prepared servant in the Coptic Orthodox Church has ideally been engendered with knowledge and insights about the nature of people, their thoughts and minds, and of how lives vary as people live where they live. He has a heart full of love for all people, irrespective of colour, ethnicity, family, religion or nation. Only such a heart can legitimately aspire to win souls.

CONVICTION

The Lord has given various Egyptian servants to the African mission service who have been fruitful, to a large extent, because of their great love for the spread of the gospel, and their conviction of the importance of the Lord's mission commandment: *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."* (Matthew 28:19)

The successful evangelist has a conviction of the pure, spiritual motivation for evangelism, availing him the heavenly power to endure all things while living in a strange land.

Those who shared in the mission without preparation or conviction often showed aberrant patterns in their behaviour, frequently not wanting to continue, or submerging themselves in other material, mission activities, like building, or searching for personal benefits. Some manifested symptoms of: culture shock; depression due to the isolating affect of limited language; a severe obsession with pastoral care- not being able to adopt the mission mind they felt a

great vacancy, realising their diminished contributions and deplete fruits.

TYPE OF FRUITS NEEDED FROM THE MISSION

What kinds of fruits are needed from the mission? Is it the showy or the deep, materialistic or spiritual, quantity or quality?

Mission fruits are not assessed by those who have been baptised without preparation but should be evaluated through the change of souls, hearts and ... *by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what [is] that good and acceptable and perfect will of God* (Romans 12:2), leading a holy life and demonstrably becoming a flourishing member of the body of Christ that is the Church. Such fruits yield sacrificial servants, becoming witnesses for our Lord in Jerusalem, all Judea, and Samaria, and until the ends of the earth.

THE FIRST AFRICAN MISSION FIELD SERVANTS

There was no possibility at first to send missionaries into Africa out of Egypt, except for monks from the monasteries. Quite a few came, from: Saint Macarius- four; Saint Bishoy- four; El Baramous- two; El Muharraq- two; Saint Paula- one; Saint Antonius- one. Many of those could not continue, returning to their monasteries after varying periods for different reasons including, inability to acclimatise to life outside Egypt amongst Africans, culture shock, communication incapacities, inappropriate emphasis on the pastoral service.

When these monks returned to Egypt, they had problems in recognising why they had needed to return. Most were unable to identify their limitations and inability to serve in such a specialised field. Regrettably, they propagated widespread disinformation about the mission and denied any fruits in the African service, while the mission was growing and expanding until its present situation of thirty-five churches in ten African countries with numerous devout

servants.

FROM THE HEART OF A PRIEST IN THE MISSION FIELD FOR FIVE YEARS

A letter from Father Johannes Tawfik Awadalla

During my five years service in Africa, I learned much and received endless blessings in working with the mission. I would like to begin by thanking my good Lord from all my heart; He called me by His grace and granted me the honour of this service, despite my unworthiness.

According to the advice of H.H. Pope Shenouda III, my wife and I travelled to South Africa in January 1992 in order to obtain an idea about the nature of my forthcoming service. The Lord filled us with peace and comfort for service in the mission field of Africa. While many obstacles erupted in the way of my consecration to serve the Lord, all efforts worked effectively to fulfil the will of God. I was granted the grace of priesthood on the 13 November 1993 by the blessings and absolution of H.H. and the laying of the hands of H.G. Bishop Antonius Markos who had brought me up in the way of faith since my childhood within the church service and continuously encouraged me to become a servant of the Lord Christ.

FATHERLY CARE

Since the first day of my arrival in Johannesburg 25 December 1993, Bishop Antonius Markos received us with real love, warmth, and great joy as a father would towards his son. The first visit of H.H., in January 1994, gave me support towards my service, as well as his two following visits. Throughout the five years that I spent in blessed mission service, I felt that the hand of the Lord and the guidance of the Holy Spirit were with me at all times. The Lord's plan for me was a great one considering that the first day of

my service in priesthood was in Johannesburg, offering me the opportunity to be taught many things in the mission field and to serve my brothers in Christ, the African people. They were in need of multiple services, which would not only heal the body but also the spirit and the soul. Through the mission, we obey the Lord when He said that: "pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit the orphans and widows in trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

LESSONS LEARNED

Since the Lord is aware of all my weaknesses, He sent me to Africa to experience the real service in which there is an overflow of giving and self-sacrifice. The love of our bishop and his guidance were the tools to perform the service with full capacity. Through this experience, I have learned countless skills from the art of economy and management to caring for the young. We felt the heart of the Lord everyday and in everything we did. Though we had nothing, the Lord granted us a large and beautiful Coptic centre in an excellent location in the city. We have been blessed with a big cathedral whose shining cross has been lifted up high on its towers, signifying a very strong Coptic mission with its roots from Saint Mark the Apostle and Evangelist. This mission was revealed and supported by the successor of Saint Mark, H.H. Pope Shenouda III and his companion in the mission, H.G. Bishop A. Markos who has furthered the mission of Christ Jesus as far as the southern tip of Africa. In addition to the wonderful centre, a teaching institute was built to educate and instruct the young African deacons, in order for them to prepare them to be future leaders of the Church. Ten of these deacons were ordained as priests to shepherd about ten churches in different tribes. In addition there have been pastoral visits of H.H. to these tribal churches. His fatherly love toward the Africans and his generosity and compassion were behind the scenes for the success of the mission.

Through the service, I have gained many tools, which helped me to establish the church of Saint Mary and Saint Abraham in Canada quickly and with great success. According to God's marvellous plan, I was redirected to the churches of Saint Paul in London, Ontario and Saint Mary and Moses in Windsor.

The mission has taught me numerous lessons of which I am eternally grateful; the first being that real service is giving and showing true love for Christ and love for his children. This love was translated in a practical fellowship through which developed one family in Christ with H.G. Bishop A. Markos as its father. His Grace's love is always increasing and powerful enough to overcome all types of weaknesses and shortcomings. I have learned about his tremendous amount of effort, longsuffering, patience, spiritual vigilance, and thanksgiving, which are offered to the Lord. The daily programs in the mission are full of vital work for the sake of Christ as well as planning conferences, which entailed much more. As part of our service to care for everyone, there were continuous visitations and inquiries for each soul. The mission could not take place without continuous prayer and daily spiritual growth. Despite the holy toiling, which we constantly bore, the challenge was to meet any task with joy, meekness, and self-denial.

JOYFUL LIFE

Tasoni was very happy during our five-year stay in the Coptic Centre, which was full of love and peace. Each day she offered her time and effort to serve the Africans, the Coptic community, and all who were in need. Tasoni and my children learned many lessons such as how one could offer sincere love and give with the greatest of joy. Indeed this place was considered my birthplace in service as a priest and in all that I have become in Christ. I hope that after I have finished my duties in Canada toward my children and their future, the mission in Africa will be my final destination.

Let my God flourish the service for my beloved Bishop Antonius Markos. May the Lord grant him the health and power through the blessings and the prayers of H.H. Pope Shenouda III, who spread the mission all over the world. May our Lord keep him for many peaceful years and grant him a long life. To my Lord and Saviour be all glory, honour, and blessings. Amen.

¹ Father Johannes Tawfik Awadalla, London and Windsor, Ontario Canada, 2003

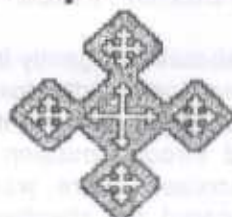


DURING THE BAPTISM OF RASTAFARI, THOSE WHO ORIGINALLY BELIEVED THAT ETHIOPIAN EMPEROR HAILLE SELASSIE (RAS TAFARI) WAS GOD, TO BE WORSHIPPED, COMMITTING TO WORSHIP OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THEY WERE PURSUADED, VIA ANECDOTES OF MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH THE EMPEROR WHILE TENTMAKER MISSIONARY IN THE 1970S IN ETHIOPIA, THAT THE EMPEROR WAS A HUMAN BEING



PALESTINE MEMORIAL DAY 1996. PRESIDENT NELSON MANDELA, REV. FR. JOHANNES AWADALLA
& THE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Chapter Five



SAINT MARK THE APOSTLE

The First to Prepare Servants for Evangelism and Pastorship

SAINT MARK THE APOSTLE'S MISSION PRODUCED A BISHOP, PRIESTS AND DEACONS

Saint Mark the Apostle laboured diligently in the field of mission and in the establishment of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and her spread across the whole land of Egypt, into North Africa and Nubia. The Church was established through mission and as the number of faithful continued to increase, there was a great necessity to prepare servants who cared for shepherding, and also for the continuation of evangelism through spread of the gospel for the expansion of His kingdom on earth.

No doubt, Saint Mark went through a great process of discipleship that was dynamic in the two fields of pastoral care, and mission. Anianus, the first bishop of Alexandria, was groomed to lead the Church after Mark and to deliver it to his successors. He ordained priests and deacons, and must have prepared evangelists through whom the Church expanded into Nubia and North Africa.

THE FIRST THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE IN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY

History confirms that after Saint Mark the Apostle spread the gospel in the land of Egypt, and many other countries, he established the first institute for theological education that was known to mankind. This Christian antiquity was called the Catechetical School of Alexandria and was renowned for the formulation of the original systems of Christian theology and for spawning many of the monumental works of Christian exegesis.¹

Although its chief function was the teaching of religion in the age of faith, other subjects, such as humanities, science and mathematics,

¹ Atiya, Aziz S., *A History of Eastern Christianity*, (Methuen and Co Ltd and University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p 33

formed part of the curriculum. Its exact origins are shrouded in the mists of time and our knowledge of its existence is best associated with the well-known scholars who presided. Most of the eminent leaders of Alexandrian Christianity were connected with it, either as teachers or students. In fact, the history of that school may be significantly reflected in the biographies of those personalities who headed it; their contributions to theological scholarship endure as vital foundations for any contemporary studies of Christian divinity. One of the great names to emerge as head of the school was Pantaeus, who the Copts described as a citizen of Egypt, and certainly he was an inhabitant of Alexandria. Apart from being a great teacher, he is credited with being one of the early architects of adoption of the Greek alphabet in the Coptic script.¹

It is historical record that many of the bishops and church leaders of the early Church were graduates of the first theological school in Alexandria, some becoming patriarchs on the apostolic seats of the churches known at that time.

MISSION AND PASTORAL WORK - SERVANTS' PREPARATION

The Coptic Orthodox Church, in her modern time of revival since early last century, has taken much care to prepare servants of all levels, including Sunday school for children, youth service, servants for the rural areas, education of young women, social services and vocational training. It seems that the term, "servant preparation", was coined during the time of revival; that the concept did not exist before then. It was well known that the old priests from early last century were taken to priesthood by succession from their parents, without any preparation or discipline.

¹ Atiya, Aziz S., *A History of Eastern Christianity*, (Methuen and Co Ltd. and University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), pp 33-34

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL MOVEMENT OR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Saint Habib Gerges, a celibate, who started the great Sunday School Movement in the Church, recognised the inordinate importance of preparing a new generation of very well educated Copts who knew the Holy Bible intimately, as well as the Church, dogma and doctrine. As he started to serve "the Sunday School Movement", it was renamed "Christian Education" because of the wider ramifications of discipline through the Word, by example and deeds. As it found great acceptance in the hearts of the spiritual Copts, who loved the Word of God and the doctrine of the Church, the instruction was organised weekly and spread until it reached all over Christian Egypt. Christian Education was a great movement of discipleship, with a prospective role for everyone- each man, woman, youth and child teaching and serving according to his gifts.

NEED FOR THEOLOGICAL COLLEGES

The Movement grew to include the establishment of numerous theological colleges and specialised theological institutes, as people realised that the fruits and power of the Word of God are the only way for the revival of the Church. These educational establishments entrenched a deep-rooted culture of teaching and discipleship. They enabled the intensification of faith and strengthening of Church doctrine as the Holy Spirit touched the hearts of millions.

Hundreds of monks, nuns and outstanding bishops, and thousands of priests, consecrated youth, deacons, deaconesses, and village servants have been part of this service of teaching and discipleship. As well, this educational process spread to the lands of immigration, Europe, the Middle East and one of its fruits, during the great revival led by the blessed papacy of H.H. Pope Shenouda III, is the African mission service.

EDUCATION AND REVIVAL

A formidable presence, power and audible voice grew exponentially with Christian Education, renewing the spirit of the Church and establishing fresh foundations in the preparation of church servants.

The Lord granted a very great saint to the Church in the person of the late, H.H. Pope Kyrillos VI, who was committed to teaching and discipleship. He ordained the first Bishop for Christian Education and the Theological Institutions in 1962. H.G. Bishop Shenouda, and after, H.H. Pope Shenouda III, became renowned by many as the Athanasius of the 20th/ 21st centuries.

H.H. Pope Shenouda has worked very hard, with great energy and power, and supported by the Grace of God he changed the monastery of Anba Ruweiss on Ramses Street in Cairo into a very busy place that is full of activity, day and night, emphasising the importance of Bible study. Every Wednesday, he leads a Bible study in the Saint Mark Cathedral that has been attended by hundreds of thousands of people. Likewise, he: uplifted all the clerical and theological colleges, which now have day and evening programs; established the Pope Kyrillos VI Theological College, the Coptic Institute of Higher Studies- including African Studies-, the Pastoral Institute, the Coptic Music Institute, the Iconography and Coptic Art Institute, the Media Centre- including the Anba Ruweiss and "Keraza" printing presses. All has been done in the spirit of Church revival- teaching and discipleship- for the expansion of the kingdom of God.

With the same spirit and with the encouragement of H.H., new theological colleges were established in the dioceses in Upper and Lower Egypt- seven at first- to bring access to theological education closer to the people. One of the most obvious fruits has been the improved preparation of church servants in all fields.

One of the most active theological colleges is in Shebeen-El-Kom, the Diocese of Menoufia, which provides a very special service to prepare future priests and deacons from African countries. Since 1985, not less than twenty-six sons and daughters of the African continent have been accommodated, taught and trained through scholarships in Shebeen-El-Kom under the loving care and shepherdhood of H.G. Bishop Benjamin the Bishop of Menoufia.

IMPORTANCE OF PREPARING SERVANTS AND PRIESTS FOR THE AFRICAN CHURCHES

The Coptic missionary out of Egypt into Africa starts his service, looking for catechumens, travelling far and wide to study the abilities of the people, their habits, culture and tradition, then instructing, teaching and preparing them for baptism. After that, he plants churches amongst them while the Church continues to expand across language and ethnic groups (tribes), and borders. When the Church grows in number and level of spirituality, the missionary should look amongst the multitudes to identify the well-educated sons of the tribe who love the Church, and are committed to the sacraments, teachings, and church practices. These should be prepared for service, initially amongst the children and youth, or for assistance in identifying and nurturing new branches. The importance of central roles for key, local people cannot be overstressed because of their invaluable knowledge of local language, cultures and traditions, and their acceptability to those whom they shall serve. They can become nearer to the hearts of the people than anyone else.

While leading the baptised people in the Church- until leaders, servants, priests and elders emerged- our fathers, the apostles, employed the following system:

SELL

Saint Peter stood with the eleven in the day of the Pentecost, raised his voice and presented them the message of salvation: ... *[That] whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* (Acts 2:21) A large number of people's hearts were pricked by the message they heard, questioning Peter and the other apostles in the vain of: "What shall we do, oh dear brothers?"

TELL

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38). These words were accepted very well and on that day the Church gained three thousand souls.

PARTICIPATE

As they continued with teaching, breaking bread, fellowship, and prayers, they were able to choose deacons (diakonia) from amongst the baptised. They chose seven, who were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, and were put forward by the people. The apostles then ordained them by laying of their hands and afterwards, took them everywhere to participate together in service, and train them comprehensively in mission and pastoral care. (Acts 6:5-6)

DELEGATE

They gave them a mission and delegated them for service- *As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have*

called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent [them] away. (Acts 13:2,3)

A PYRAMID SHOULD BE BUILT FROM ITS BASE

A pyramid should be built from its base: this is the way the Lord led us from the first day in the mission field, as we continued preparing indigenous servants who are serving those who are joining the Church every day.

In the preliminary stage, we had to "sell". This can be the hardest part, delivering convincingly the originality, authenticity, and apostolicity of the African Church. As this huge effort continued for many years, a great base developed in many branches. We could imagine that the first, second and third rows of the popular (pyramid) base were built, being added to daily. As you are acting, reacting and interacting day-by-day and year-by-year: you give, they give; you lead them, they affect you; you influence them... In this way, we discover many talents, abilities, gifts and copious spiritual preparedness, all prospectively for the purpose of serving the Lord, and working for the expansion of His kingdom.

From the outset, we were proactive in indigenous church servant preparation. After identification by their people, recommended servants in both Kenya and South Africa have come to the Church headquarters to live amongst us. There, they are examined spiritually, morally and psychologically and taught various subjects and disciplines, including: the Holy Bible, comparative theology, church history and dogma, liturgical prayers, deaconship, church rites, music and songs. Over many years, new skills are also transferred, such as computer literacy, typesetting, welding, painting, building, carpentry, driving and bookkeeping.

We strive to assure students' full participation in the service side-by-

side with us in the different branches. They regularly lead the children and youth services, and preach in conferences. We also aim to develop constructive creativity, valuing new ideas and suggestions that will build the Church and her expansion.

As we feel sufficient confidence in the standard of moral behaviour, spirituality, knowledge, love for the Church and eagerness to serve the living body of Christ, scholarships to the Mother Church in Egypt are arranged. These are generally for periods of between one and three years.

THE ROLE OF THE MOTHER CHURCH IN THE SERVICE OF THE MISSION

From the first day in the service of the mission, the great desire of my heart has been that every African should be introduced to the depth of the Church and her originality. Through visiting Egypt's Biblical sites, deserts, monasteries, churches, towns and cities where there is great historical richness, it is possible to glimpse the age and authenticity of the Church. However, to make this accessible is not easy, as lots of money and abilities are needed.

The importance of new priests and servants spending a longer time in Egypt, in the bosom of the Mother Church, was and continues as a subject of my regular prayers, supplications, meditations and thinking as to how this could be fulfilled. Who could take care of that? The Lord who listens and answers in so many ways that do not occur to the mind of man has His wonderful and totally unexpected means.

KENYA 1985-

HIS GRACE BISHOP BENJAMIN, THE BISHOP OF MENOUFIA VISITS

In November 1985, the closure of my first decade in the evangelistic

service approached. Until that time, none of my brother bishops had managed to spend any substantial time with me in the mission. The late H.G. Bishop Samuel and H.G. Bishop Bakhomius had spent brief periods, and H.H. had made a quick stopover in October 1979 on his way to and from Zaire.

The visit of H.G. Bishop Benjamin was a big blessing, as we spent ten full days together, travelling with our Kenyan priests to all the branches of the service- then, Ukambani, Nakuru, Maseno and Nairobi- and also visiting the resident Copts. Together, we were able to study the factors that were aiding and hindering the Kenyan mission.

At H.G. Bishop Benjamin's farewell party, in which all the Kenyan and Coptic members were gathered in the Bishopric of African Affairs in Nairobi, there was an expression by H.G. Bishop Benjamin of his amazement and wonder at what had been achieved; this, he had seen and heard for himself. As well, he spoke of his admiration of the deacons' discipleship classes that we had been running for years- at that stage, Haroun, Jacob, Thomas, John, Cosmos and David were participating deacons.

Further to this, H.G. said: "After we have seen a true apostolic mission of the Church, taking us back to the early centuries of our ancient Church, we cannot stand as spectators. We see the enormous need to continue what has been achieved and to work for the growth of such a notable and honourable mission, which gives the Mother Church power, expansion, comfort and hope for the future to be able to serve in the whole African continent and, in fact, in all countries of the world."

After this, H.G. looked at me and said: "Ask anything. Whatever you ask me, I will do my best to fulfil. Tell me, what are your needs? As I see, the needs are too many but may the Lord enable me to do what I can."

I felt a profound joy in my heart, as I knew that Bishop Benjamin was leading a very successful, high-standard theological college in Shebeen-El-Kom. The best available specialists in theological education- professors, bishops, teachers- were invited there; I knew that the Lord was answering my prayers and truly listening to the great eagerness of my heart because it was according to His heart.

REQUEST FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF OUR AFRICAN SONS IN PREPARATION FOR PRIESTHOOD

In the book of Malachi 2:7 we are told: *"For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And [people] should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts ..."*

Saint Paul, speaks about the servant of God; the elder; the priest: *... must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having [his] children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the [same] condemnation as the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (1 Timothy 3:2-7)*

...holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. (Titus 1:9)

I did not ask for something that would "leave with the tide" or be consumed by the everyday expenses of the Bishopric. Being reminded of Saint Mark and the bishops, patriarchs, scholars and all the wise that emerged from the Catechetical School of Alexandria, and as I believe strongly in the importance of discipleship, education

and training, and the wisdom that can benefit in Africa from generation to generation, I asked for assistance in sound education and training for our future priests, before their ordinations.

UPLIFTING THE SERVANTS' STANDARDS

While on scholarship in Egypt, upliftment of the servants' standards is the aim of multidimensional approaches, including: spiritual, psychological, ecclesiastical, moral, knowledge and doctrinal.

Their educational program is structured to incorporate-

- ◊ Learning from examples of Coptic priests' service at a close distance
- ◊ Learning the life of fasting, prayer and regular confession as they live the Holy Bible
- ◊ Visiting the Coptic monasteries in the Egyptian desert, being introduced to the life of contemplation and meditation
- ◊ Visiting the glorious, historical places of the Holy Family in Egypt
- ◊ Attending the weekly Bible study of H.H. Pope Shenouda III, in which thousands participate
- ◊ Travelling to vocational training projects that are assisting the jobless attain self-reliance and productivity
- ◊ Witnessing the ordination of metropolitans and bishops in the Saint Mark Cathedral in Anba Ruweiss, which is the headquarters of the Church in the entire world

SEEING IS BELIEVING

Our Lord Jesus Christ said to Thomas: ... *Blessed [are] those who have not seen and [yet] have believed.*" (John 20:29) *Because you have seen me Thomas, did you believe?* This was spoken in regard to His resurrection and service on earth for the salvation and redemption of mankind, for all generations until His second coming.

John the evangelist wrote: ... *but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name* (John 20:31).

With matters that concern, for example, the witness of our fathers the apostles, and their relics and deeds, we can say: Faith is through seeing, or seeing is believing. It is very important for those who are new in the faith to be introduced to the depths of the Church, including her antiquities, relics and holy places. Those who can see and touch will more readily share in the blood, sweat, tears, sufferings and pains.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COPTS' VISITS TO HOLY PLACES

The churches and dioceses in Egypt carefully prepare regular trips for all members, particularly the youth, to the holy sites. Some trips focus on the monasteries of Upper Egypt, the valley of Natroun in the western desert, the Saint Mina Monastery in Marioutis, Alexandria, the Saint Mark Cathedral in Anba Ruweiss, the relics of Saint Mark or the Virgin Mary Church in Zeitoun, where she appeared.

All of these experiences play a vital role in faith strengthening, stimulating the visitors to believe what they have seen by their own eyes. Such is the mechanism by which the senses enable knowledge to enter the mind of man, changing into Life and Spirit.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AFRICANS' (NON-EGYPTIANS') VISITS TO THE MOTHER CHURCH

If we are aware of the spiritual stimuli afforded by Coptic Christians' visits to Egyptian historical and holy sites that date back two thousand years, it is obvious what great importance such visits would have for new members from Africa, outside Egypt. Formal teaching has its effects and benefits but is limited. Even viewing slides or videos conveys a more comprehensive sense but there is nothing that replaces actual presence in a place. The feeling of inspiration, understanding of the depth of spirituality of Christian antiquity, and experience of holiness that can come from being there is a priceless blessing.

Scholars that are sent from Kenya and South Africa to Egypt, live and are taught at the Shebeen-El-Kom Theological College, under the care of H.G. Bishop Benjamin, the reverend fathers, honourable priests and professors.

In Shebeen, students are able to smell, feel and taste the Copt's dedication to the Church, as she struggles for her existence and expansion. They witness the dedication of grandparents and parents to their children, as they instruct and guide them in the ways of purity, and how young men and women dedicate their bodies to the Lord, until they marry in accordance with the holy sacrament, forming a very sound family. Also, students experience the sacrifice and giving of the Coptic people, who conscientiously tithe, and fully support all of their dioceses. They truly experience what the book of Malachi says: *Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,* Says the Lord of hosts, *"If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you [such] blessing That [there] [will] not [be] [room] enough [to] [receive] [it]."* (Malachi 3:10)

DEACONS AND DEACONESSSES SENT FROM KENYA TO SHEBEEN-EL-KOM

- ◊ Deacons Haroun Ayanga, Cosmos Ndambukie, David Otieno travelled to Egypt 11 March 1986.

Cosmos returned after one year, and he was ordained in the name of Father Abraham, 21 January 1988 in Ukambani amongst his people, with the absolution of H.H. Pope Shenouda III and by the laying of my hands. He departed this world 31 October 1992, due to very severe sickness.

Deacon Haroun continued his studies in Shebeen-El-Kom for three full years, returning to Kenya 18 March 1989, being ordained into priesthood by the name of Father Haroun, 6 September 1992, with the absolution of H.H. Pope Shenouda III and by the laying of my hands. Father Haroun departed this world after severe sickness 7 October 2000.

- ◊ Deacons Thomas Okwach and Jacob travelled to Shebeen-El-Kom 8 March 1993, continuing their studies until 10 July 1995. They were ordained into priesthood amongst their own people, 18 February 1996, in Maseno, through the absolution of H.H. Pope Shenouda III and by the laying of the hands of myself and H.G. Bishop Paul.
- ◊ Deacon Joseph Mutie from Ukambani travelled to Shebeen-El-Kom 9 May 1993 and returned to Kenya 10 July 1995. He was ordained, Father Joseph, 8 May 1998 in Cairo by the laying of the hands of H.H. Pope Shenouda III.
- ◊ Deacon Timothy travelled to Shebeen-El-Kom 11 April 1996 and returned to Kenya after less than one year, being ordained as Father Timothy by the laying of the hands of

H.H. Pope Shenouda III 30 March 1997 in Saint Mark Church, Johannesburg.

- ◊ Deaconess Demiana (Mary Mtuku) travelled from Germany to Egypt, where she spent from 1 June 1994 until 1 June 1996 in Shebeen-El-Kom. She was joined there by deaconesses: Rachel, Barbara (Naomi), Maria (Mary) and Elizabeth, who spent from June 1995- June 1996. On return to Kenya, Elizabeth left the service to return to the world, while Demiana, Rachel, Barbara and Maria presently serve in Maseno.

- ◊ Sister Naomi, who had joined the life of celibacy 4 May 1981, returned to Kenya in 1982. In September 1985, she went again to Egypt and since, has been permanently resident in the monastery of Saint Anba Bishoy in the papal residence. In 1990, she returned to Kenya for just a few weeks visit.

DEACONS SENT FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA TO SHEBEEN-EL-KOM

- ◊ Deacons Paul Khobe, John and Patrick went from KwaZulu to Shebeen-El-Kom in September 1995 until September 1996. Father Paulos Khobe was ordained by the laying of hands of H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 8 May 1998.
- ◊ Following significant preparation time spent in Johannesburg, Deacons Samuel Matoilo, Joseph Chabangu and Ernest Ntamo were sent to Shebeen, 25 November 1999. After one year's study there, Samuel and Joseph were ordained as priests, Fathers Shenouda Matoilo and Bishoy Chabangu, 9 October 2000, by the laying of the hands of H.H. Pope Shenouda.

- ◊ Next, Deacons Samuel Jim and Ananias travelled, 3 October 2000, to Shebeen. After one year's study, they returned, 5 October 2001, with Ernest, who completed two years. Deacons Ernest Ntamo and Samuel Jim were subsequently ordained as Fathers Angelos Ntamo and Musa Jim, 31 March 2002, through the absolution of H.H. Pope Shenouda, by the laying of my hands in the Saint Mark Cathedral in Johannesburg, at the request of their own South African congregations.
- ◊ Three deacons left for study, July 2002, in Egypt- Mehare, from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Zimbabwean Banda, and Sekwadi from South Africa. Mehare and Banda have returned to Ethiopia and Zimbabwe respectively.
- ◊ Deacons Johannes Maluleke and Ndumiso Hlabe travelled to Egypt 25 March 2003, and Deacon Wander from Zimbabwe joined them 15 April 2003. Now, at this time of Resurrection of the Lord in 2003, there are four deacons studying in Shebeen-El-Kom, being educated and prepared for their tentative ordination in the future, through the Grace of God.



To date, the Bishopric of Menoufia has hosted a total of twenty-four Africans, from outside Egypt, for training and education in Shebeen-El-Kom, for periods averaging between one and three years. Fourteen of these have been from Southern Africa, and ten from Kenya. Twelve of those have been ordained into priesthood: ten are still serving, and two priests have departed this world.

May the Lord abundantly reward H.G. Bishop Benjamin and all those who serve with him, with the heavenly, for the great toil,

dedication and vision they have invested in preparing deacons for priesthood with the highest level of education and training, enabling them the potential to pray and serve optimally. All those who have witnessed the prayers of the priests who have gone through this scholarship have admired their abilities to richly and completely implement the sacraments of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

ORDINATIONS

In addition to those deacons whose ordinations as priests have already been detailed under "Deacons Sent to Shebeen-El-Kom"¹, the following ordinations should also be noted.

KENYA

- ◊ The first local ordinations in priesthood in Kenya were Fathers Anthony Otieno, Samuel Otenyo and John Oliywe, through the absolution of H.H. Pope Shenouda III and laying of my hands, 1 November 1981.
- ◊ Father Michail Ngonga Aketch was ordained into priesthood by the laying of the hands of H.H. Pope Shenouda in Nairobi's Saint Mark Cathedral in January 1994.

SOUTH AFRICA

In June 1994, six elders of the African Orthodox, with Simon Khobe from the Coptic Orthodox, travelled to Cairo. They were accommodated in the Saint Mark Centre in Nasr City near Cairo. By the laying of the hands of H.H., they were ordained, in the early hours of 28 June 1994, in the small church of the papal residence in Anba Ruweiss.

¹ Refer pages 105-107

They were given orthodox names:

- ◊ Simon Khobe- Father Morcos
- ◊ Simon Mohlonyane- Father Kyrillos
- ◊ Philip Mabunda- Father Philip
- ◊ Augustine Qatanya- Father Augustinos Paulos
- ◊ Zondo Kunene- Father Antonius
- ◊ Melumzi Sambu- Father Basilious
- ◊ Siphiwo Makhalima- Father Athanasius.

HOPED FOR CHANGES IN AFRICANS' SPIRITUAL LIVES

In the mission service, we aim to increase depth of understanding, renewing shape and changing the mind regarding original African Orthodoxy, enlightening and strengthening through knowledge of the orthodoxy of Egypt. Over time, as these influences infiltrate the various ethnic groups, through their sons and daughters who have been successful students, more will be in much better positions to offer living, holy sacrifices acceptable to God. Then, their worship and teaching will hopefully be in accordance with the true, apostolic ways of the Church early days. In this way, Africans will have been given every opportunity to emulate the faithful lives of the saints of the Egyptian desert, and the spirituality of Egypt.

AFRICAN LEADERS' EXPERIENCES OF VISITING EGYPTIAN HOLY SITES

In November 1979, I invited nineteen African independent church

leaders, from nine African countries, to Egypt.

THE CAVE OF SAINT PAULA THE FIRST HERMIT

Part of the program was visits to the monasteries of the Eastern Desert, which are those of Saint Paula and Saint Anthony. When we entered the cave of the first hermit, Saint Paula, the late head of the Kimbanguist Church from Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) crossed his arms on his chest, standing in deep meditation while tears flowed from his eyes. He whispered to me: "I have never felt such great awe, fear and deep spirituality in any other place of any that I have visited all over the world." He stood for a prolonged period, while gazing at Saint Paula's relics, the sanctuary and the altar. All of the other delegates silently surrounded him, standing motionless for some minutes. The silence was broken spontaneously as they joined together in rousing spiritual songs that made the whole cave shake.

STANDING ON THE SHORES OF THE RED SEA

Returning from Saint Anthony's monastery we passed by the shores of the Red Sea. They asked: "What is this water?" I told them and they appealed vociferously to stop the bus, particularly the Nigerians, Adijobe and Abiola, and the South African Bishop Mokoena. They wanted to touch the water where Moses', the great prophet's, and the people of God's feet had been. They went eagerly to the water, put their feet into it, doused their faces and filled any empty receptacle that they could find with this "living Bible" (water and sand), which they took as a great blessing and testimony.

THE ANCIENT CHURCH OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN MAADI, CAIRO

The next visit was to the spot where the Holy Family is known to have crossed the Nile from the eastern to the western shore. History

tells us that this is also the place where the daughter of pharaoh found Moses floating on the water in the basket. The Saviour of the world and the deliverer of Israel were inextricably linked here. The visitors were again insistent on touching the water, in spite of the fact that a locked gate separated us from it. After sending a messenger to the priest's house for the gate key, we were able to reach the Nile where they soaked themselves with water and even drank from it, as: "the feet of the Virgin Mary, the Carpenter and even the Lord Jesus had been there". In the Virgin Mary Church of Maadi, they were also moved to see the ancient Bible that was found some years before, floating on the river at the site of the church. When found, it had been open at the prophetic Isaiah 19:19-*In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the Lord at its border.*

"YOUR WATERS ARE HOLY"

In Kenya in the 1970s, sitting on the shores of Lake Victoria in Kisumu with Luo people from all the surrounding areas, I reminded them that their lake water was holy. When they questioned me, I explained: "Our Lord Jesus Christ with the Virgin Mary drank from this water and He washed in it. This water, through the River Nile, goes all the way from Lake Victoria to Egypt where we drink it." Those Luo people had not seen the Biblical sites in Egypt but we told them about it.

We also told them of the great miracle of Saint Mark when he healed the hand of Anianus, the shoe repairer who he first met on his mission in Alexandria. I elaborated with details of the evangelism of Saint Mark in Egypt. They listened very well, particularly when I spoke of his pain and sufferings and his martyrdom. I informed them of his five titles: Apostle, Evangelist, Pure, Martyr, and Beholder of the Lord, and his struggle to expand the kingdom of God, and establish His church. With a deep feeling of admiration and love of Saint Mark, I described his persecution by the Romans and

advocates of pagan religions, who lost their congregations through his converting multitudes to Christianity.

After this meeting, I returned to Nairobi, and two weeks later came again to Lake Victoria, where there were many waiting for me with banana leaves, and two rows of people clad in traditional dress, singing a melodious tune with original lyrics, which inspired me deeply. The Luo song was named "Mariko Maler", meaning "Saint Mark". I listened attentively as we entered the church, asking: "What is this song?" They answered: "That day you told us the story of Saint Mark, we could not go to sleep because we were very much inspired and excited by it. Instead, we all shared in recalling the details of the story, sitting around a gas lamp at midnight, including as much as we could in the six verses we have composed in our own Luo language and tuned ourselves."

This song became very effective in the life of the Church in Kenya. We gave it in English to many congregations of different ethnicities and they translated and tuned according to their own cultures and languages. It is now sung in Luo, Kikuyu, Kikamba and KiSwahili and has become an official Church song. When we examine the lyrics and melody, our analysis finds that it is Biblically, dogmatically and historically correct, reflecting the orthodox teaching of the Church in sweet harmony with the culture of the people, effectively expressing their faith.

THE HOLISTIC APPROACH IN THE AFRICAN MISSION SERVICE OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

In the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, He took the shape of man, offering him salvation and redemption from his sins, and resurrection from the death-by-sin. He acted with great mercy and love towards all people, seeing them as *sheep without a shepherd* (Mark 6:34), feeling their pain and suffering. The Bible teaches us that the Lord took care of their salvation through the

Word of God, and, as well, considered their physical and material needs.

There are several examples in the New Testament where our Lord Jesus Christ gave full attention to the physical needs of the people. For example, in Mathew 14:14-21, Mark 6:30-44, and Luke 9:10-17 we read where He healed the sick and fed five thousand people, taking particular, loving care of their physical needs.

Our Lord Jesus also encouraged self-reliance, reminding those who ate from the loaves and fishes: *"... you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because 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). He was not reproaching them for seeking and working, but for pursuing temporary satisfaction rather than

eternal life. Twelve baskets of remaining food were collected after the feeding of the five thousand, and in this, He challenges all those involved in mission, to use all their skills and abilities in promoting continual spiritual productivity, and subsequent self-reliance - not to waste them.

GIVE A HUNGRY MAN A FISH- SATISFY HIS HUNGER FOR ONE DAY; TEACH HIM FISHING- SATISFY HIS HUNGER FOR A LIFETIME

The evangelistic ministry is aware that chronic, money or perishable items giving, to satisfy immediate bodily needs, leads only to a destructive dependency creation. Instead, the mission applies the maxim: "If you give a hungry man a fish, you satisfy his hunger for one day; if you teach him fishing, you satisfy his hunger for a lifetime." We strive to solicit his contribution to training costs, no matter how small, and to enable him sustained access to suitable "fishing equipment", and also the skills and knowledge to catch fish and market it. This

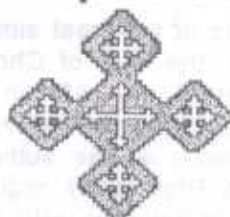
holistic approach is constructive, non-wasteful and developmental: by optimal use of available resources, potential for self-reliance is promoted, as is a mechanism- knowledge, skills and training techniques- to benefit other community members.

Accompanying the training centres established in Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe, there are South African vocational training centres attached to our churches in Guguletu (Cape Town) and Nongoma (KwaZulu Natal), respectively the Dr Moufeed Ragheb and the Virgin Mary of Zeitoun Centres. Numerous people have successfully acquired skills and completed courses. Since the establishment of the first centre in Kenya in 1984, more than 420 sewing machines have been given to graduates in five countries.

Recently, a vocational training centre has been completed in Ondangwa, Namibia, and we are now building South African centres in Tumahole and Soshanguve. The nature of vocational skills training will be determined by local community requests, existing skills and needs, and the future range seems likely to include brick laying, welding and computer literacy.

As James the Apostle says: *What [does] [it] profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what [does] [it] profit?* (James 2:14-16)

Chapter Six



ORTHODOXY IN AFRICA

The Role Of The Coptic Orthodox Church In Christian Orthodoxy's Entrenchment On The African Continent

WHY ORTHODOXY IN AFRICA

In South Africa, 1992, one of my great aims, through God's grace, was to put orthodoxy on the map of Christianity in that country. Roman Catholic, Protestant and African independent churches proliferated with little evidence of orthodoxy. Whilst acknowledging the Coptic Orthodox Church as the authentic mother Church of Africa, the Romans and Protestants registered palpable anxiety when they questioned our activities with the African independent churches. They expressed concern about Africans, "coming to do what?" with other Africans, meaning the Copts with those of the African independent churches.

Why orthodoxy in Africa?

Many of the western churches in Africa are losing their spirit and Biblical way of life. For example, single mothers are spoken of as a norm, while homosexuality and polygamy are referred to as "honest" and "Biblically acceptable". We frequently hear that "God is love and God loves everybody"; therefore, "all behaviour is acceptable in the eyes of God". Such thinking lends credence to the ordination of homosexual ministers of religion and other aberrations.

The behaviour and assertions of Christians themselves have tarnished the image of Christianity in Africa. Many Protestant Churches express their disbelief in the miraculous birth of Christ through the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary. Some employ versions of the Bible, referring to the virgin birth (Gk- Parthenos and Hebrew-Alma) in Isaiah 7:14, as a birth by a "young woman". Others raise their voices in distrust of the true resurrection of Christ, insisting that it is symbolic. Likewise, prominent church leaders have been heard to declare that the Holy Spirit shines through pagans; that a non-believer had the Holy Spirit shining through him. One well-known archbishop of a church in South Africa spoke authoritatively, through the national and international media, in defence of single

motherhood, homosexuality, polygamy, fornication and adultery. He declared that his own family included practitioners of all these activities and that the church should acculturate.

Orthodoxy emerges as a practical means of steadfastness in the straight ways of our Lord, and a vital Christian life. It brings the early Church to the human mind and heart, through the power of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments. Without it, the deviations that have been propagated over the last few decades would misrepresent Christianity. These have been manifest in many Christians' move from the apostolic teachings, promoting accommodation of the contemporary world by trying to enable the world to dictate to the Church. Instead, an orthodox approach assumes the power of the Holy Spirit to change and uplift man. All this is through the grace of God and daily interaction with the sacraments of the Church, towards a life that embraces purity, monogamy, holy sex within marriage, and the genuine commitment of a father and mother within the family. It necessitates a determined stand against all the worldly deviations and corruption that originate with lust, striving for physical, mental and spiritual health, which will facilitate the fashioning of heavenly creatures that are equipped for eternal life.

THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE STRENGTHENING OF CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

We had it in our heart and mind to promote Christian orthodoxy in southern Africa, being authentic, apostolic and African with a sustained tradition for close to two millennia.

Some leaders of the Dutch Reformed Churches approached us in admiration of the orthodox way of life. They had become acutely dissatisfied with the "superficiality of Protestantism", which they felt pulled them to the "letter" and away from the Word- ... *for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.* (2 Corinthians 3:6)

THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH'S ROLE IN HER ESTABLISHMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa it is estimated that there are more than seven thousand Russian Orthodox people, who had been left without a shepherd- many very far from the mother Church. Through invitation of a very devout Dutch Reformed pastor, Reverend Brian Cross, who has orthodoxy deep in his heart, we visited a few Russian Orthodox families in their homes in Pretoria for a prayer and Bible study. We offered them regular gatherings at any of their homes but our offer was declined, perhaps due to language barriers and cultural differences. With others that we met, we suggested that they should write to the Patriarchate of Moscow, requesting the establishment of a church. We were very open to intermittent visits for prayer, Bible study, and to share a spiritual life. Although they did not follow up on our offer, it was the way of God that they did write to Moscow, requesting a church and service in South Africa. The Saint Sergius Radonezh Parish was established by the decision of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, 28 December 1998, following the request of Russian-speaking Eastern Orthodox Christian believers.

Around June 1999, Moscow sent Father Sergiy Razzkazovsky, with his family, renting them a Midrand house. Father Sergiy was a great theological teacher from Saint Petersburg, with tremendous depth of spirituality, but arrived with a cursory grasp of South African English and no experience of how to register a church or obtain a work permit. He fell into the hands of some compatriots who wanted to make "quick dollars," selling him an over-priced, dysfunctional car.

Father Sergiy was without locally-relevant guidance from Moscow and, anxious and pale, arrived precipitately one day in September 1999 at the Coptic Orthodox Headquarters in Parkview. With him, were a translator and some people from the Russian Orthodox

congregation, seeking help. He addressed me saying: "Vladiko, Your Grace Bishop Antonius Markos, I was told that you are the only one who will wholeheartedly assist me. I need your fatherly help." We welcomed them with great love, committing to work very hard to assist as best we could. The Lord made our collaborative efforts prosper, as the Russian Orthodox Church was registered, with a brand new constitution and the name of "The Russian Orthodox Church, Saint Sergius of Radonezh Parish (Moscow Patriarchate)", in record time, as a non-profit, welfare organisation with tax exemption. This placed the South African Parish directly under the Moscow Patriarchate yet, historically under the Alexandrian Patriarchate.

SPIRITUAL REVIVAL AMONGST THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX

There was rapid progress with Father Sergiy's service, as he worked devotedly, day after day, towards initiation of a great spiritual life amongst his people. His wife, Matushka, his daughter, Masha, and his son, Nicholai, led the choir, teaching the people the beautiful hymns of the Russian Orthodox liturgy. The Russians started to love the Church, and become steeped in Her spirituality, directly due to the faithful priest's unstinting efforts in a very difficult service. Great joy swept amongst the congregation when they heard that their Church was registered with the South African Government.

Father Sergiy used to invite me to attend committee meetings to contribute advice and guidance.

The hand of the Lord enabled the identification of land, and purchase at an encouraging price from the Methodist Church in Midrand, in a favourable area between Johannesburg and Pretoria. With the Coptic Orthodox Church contributing to enable its finalisation, a low interest loan was secured from a local Christian development trust. A planner and architect evolved a development

plan of the church site, and Father Sergiy's car was traded in at a truly miraculous price towards purchase of a viable alternative to the defunct vehicle he had been trying to drive without success.

One Saturday afternoon, the Church Committee gathered at Father Sergiy's home, raising many fears and doubts concerning the project of church building and the associated financial implications. I tried to encourage them through reliance on our rich and powerful God, not on the weakness of limited man.

To provide a practical lesson, I said: "Why should you not all follow me to the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral?" We drove thirty kilometres in a convoy of nine cars until we reached Parkview. They were amazed at what they saw, asking so many questions and being highly convinced by the assurances of our zealous God to complete His church.

However, seemingly due to the great developments, there was huge pressure by non-spiritual interests on the Moscow Patriarchate, which announced that Father Sergiy would be transferred to Toronto in Canada to continue his service, while a monk priest would be sent from Moscow to replace him.

Father Philaret Bulekov followed in Father Sergiy's footsteps in South Africa, further extending the service to other southern African countries, including Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Angola. In South Africa, the service has been extended to Durban and Cape Town. We also introduced the Church to the South African Council of Churches, providing all necessary documents for her membership in the ecumenical body.

God has helped us very much with the establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church in assisting morally, and wherever and in whatever way possible, and we feel very happy and thankful as we continue to observe the construction and progress of the church

building- a glory to God and historical landmark in southern Africa. While she is not from the Oriental Orthodox Churches' communion, the Russian Orthodox Church is very similar to the Coptic Orthodox Church in many ways. She fasts as we do, celibacy and monastic life are held firm, Easter and Christmas are celebrated at the same dates, and the Russian Orthodox Church has practically displayed a great affinity with the Coptic Orthodox Church. Without doubt, we have both suffered tremendously under Hellenic Christian influence over the ages.

A RUSSIAN AWARD TO THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Patriarch of Moscow, H.H. Alexei II, saw fit to acknowledge the contributions of the Coptic Orthodox Church, notably for her efforts in South Africa. In 2001, he sent me the highest award of the Russian Orthodox Church- a highly distinguished citation, personally signed- accompanied by a beautifully adorned cross and chain.

THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH CONSECRATION

March 2, 2003, we witnessed His Eminence Metropolitan Kyril of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, who travelled with a Russian delegation of twenty-seven others, consecrating the Russian Orthodox Church, Parish of Saint Sergius of Radonezh (Moscow Patriarchate), in Midrand, South Africa. The Coptic Church presence was welcomed, with five Coptic Church elders and me in attendance. It was unquestionably a great day for the expansion of His kingdom, and an inordinate boost to Christian orthodoxy in general.

The Russian Orthodox Church building is now near completion, and the distinctive onion shaped domes will serve as a great orthodox witness, as well as a most notable tourist attraction.

THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (EOTC) AND THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH'S ROLE IN HER ESTABLISHMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

The establishment of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in South Africa was a notable miracle by all measures, as it was established by the power of God, not the power of man.

1997, some of the Ethiopian Orthodox believers, who were regularly attending the Coptic Orthodox Church for liturgical celebrations, confession and communion, asked that I attend a gathering of Ethiopians. It was the first Sunday after Christmas 2000, about seven hundred people met in the Roman Catholic Church hall in downtown Johannesburg, and they asked me to speak to them about the birth of Christ in the Amharic language.

I was amazed by the large number and questioned why they shouldn't have their own church in Johannesburg. They answered that they didn't have such money and didn't know where to start. I responded that: "God is too rich and he takes special care to establish His house of worship for the service of His people. Let us put our hands on the plough and look forwards and not back. We pray and the Lord provides. Why should you be doubtful about the richness of God to establish His own house?"

THE LEAVEN THAT CAN FERMENT THE WHOLE LOT

They were inspired by these words, and I pulled South African Rands 2,000 (two thousand) from my pocket, saying: 'Let this be the "yeast" that will ferment the lot. This is towards the establishment of your church.' The drumming, ululation and singing of praises went on for a very long time, as they considered the possibility of this development. I asked them: "What about you? Why are you keeping so quiet? You cannot be spectators in such a mission. Where are your contributions?" I insisted that they must build their

Church by active participation, and they listened attentively. Without hesitation, people produced cash, cheques and pledges that, within one hour, totalled South African Rands 32,000.

REMOVAL OF OBSTACLES- ONE AFTER ANOTHER

The EOTC committee came to tell me that they did not have any bank account in South Africa, as the officers were predominantly refugees with difficulty negotiating the South African banks. I served as guarantor with the ABSA Bank, as the Coptic Orthodox Church had been an account holder for many years, and the EOTC account was opened. Thereafter, we started to make conscious efforts to collect money. Intermittently, committee members would call or visit to inform me of an available house, building or church for sale. We scrutinised these but most were too small and priced around South African Rands 2,000,000 (two million)- seemingly beyond our ability. We committed the matter to fervent prayer and could not have imagined what followed.

THE LORD'S ANSWER

In March 1999, I was invited by the Jewish Board of Deputies to a coalition that focused on reducing crime in South Africa. While waiting for the meeting's start, my two Jewish neighbours discussed a synagogue in downtown Johannesburg (Berea), which had been for sale for the past three years. They said that its members had moved from the area, apart from a handful, and that it was valued at around three million South African Rands. No purchase offer had yet been made. I remained silent but after the meeting, returned eagerly to the Coptic Orthodox Church and phoned Mekonnen Bayeh, a very devout son from the EOTC, telling him about the available synagogue. He informed me that they had been aware of the building earlier but had neither thought of it further, nor taken any steps in this direction.

We arranged an appointment for viewing inside and were elated by what was found. As all synagogues face east, the aspect was most suitable for a Christian orthodox church. The building had an area that could be easily used as a sanctuary, there was seating for fourteen hundred people, and the building was structurally resolute with seemingly no construction costs spared. The location was ideal for the hundreds of Ethiopians who lived within walking distance of this site. I quietly made the sign of the Cross over the structure and asked for the intercessions of Saint Mark the Evangelist in securing this building for the glory of Christian orthodoxy in southern Africa, remembering what the Lord had said: *"Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours..."* (Deuteronomy 11:24)

We sat with the synagogue's chairman of the board, Mr Siggy Meinstein, also making the sign of the Cross on him. I advised that we were, in fact, cousins: "We are orthodox Christians and you are orthodox Jews. We worship the same God. We read the same Bible but we have added the New Testament. We read the book of Isaiah and pray the psalms every day. David, for us, is a great prophet."

WHAT TYPE OF OFFER ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

I further inquired whether the building was, seriously, for sale. Mr Meinstein explained that there were only eleven worshippers left, and one of the elderly, walking home from Friday evening prayer, had recently been assaulted by robbers. With the building overheads, it was not viable to continue under the circumstances, and definitely they were keen to sell. I asked Mr Meinstein: "Are you interested to sell on a business or charitable basis?" He sought clarification. I explained: "Most of the Ethiopians are new to this country, working as street vendors, hawkers and occasionally, casual tradesmen. They do not have much money and are unable to pay much. We would welcome your considering a charitable element." He volunteered: "It can never be a business sale as this land is zoned for religious purposes. We cannot change the zoning,

therefore it must be acquired by a religious institution." We did not make any mention of prices, taking all of Mr Meinstein's contact particulars. We exchanged pleasantries and on parting Mr Meinstein declared: "It has been very nice talking with you Bishop; the day I will hand you the keys of this place and walk out, I will be the most happy man." I promised to revert to him as soon as possible, endorsing that, God willing, I intended to make him "the most happy man."

THE ETHIOPIAN OFFER

The elders of the Ethiopian Church met with us and we discussed what kind of bid we would make. I asked them to make an offer of South African Rands 500,000. They objected querying how we could offer so little for a building valued at six times that price. I reminded them that there had been no offers and that this may be available to us at a "throw away price." With further urging, they wrote the offer and we placed it on the Coptic Orthodox Church altar during the next liturgy, under the paten, which carries the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. The following day, Monday, after again signing the Cross, the offer was faxed. For several days the Ethiopians called me, fearing that we had had no news because the offer had been too little, and was rejected. I reassured that we should expect a response and needed patience. Friday afternoon at 2 pm, I received a fax from Mr Meinstein, indicating that the Synagogue Board would accept an offer of South African Rands 750,000. I promptly phoned him for an appointment but as the Jewish sabbath was about to begin, he said that he would next be available on Sunday afternoon. We reconvened on Sunday, offering South African Rands 550,000. Mr Meinstein looked long and thoughtfully, saying: "Bishop Markos, the Board will never accept any less than South African Rands 700,000." I praised God, replying: "We accept."

By that time, God had really blessed us, and the EOTC bank

account held much more than the ten per cent required for a deposit to sign the contract of purchase. 30 March 2000, H.G. Bishop Petros was sent as the EOTC representative from the EOTC Patriarchate to sign the purchase agreement, while I was the signatory witness. We paid the deposit and an agreement of payment schedules over time. Bishop Petros, who is the EOTC Bishop of African Services, is much loved by our Coptic Orthodox Church, and we have given him extensive help whenever he has requested it.

In the year 2000, the Holy Passion Week and the Feast of the Resurrection were in April. The Ethiopians approached me to investigate prospects for using the synagogue for prayer during this period. When I spoke to Mr Meinstein, he indicated that it would not be possible because the synagogue must first be deconsecrated, and the Chief Rabbi, Cyril Harris, had no time until 7 May. "Until then," he told us, "it could not be used for Christian service". For celebration of the Holy Passion and Easter, this was too late. I established with Mr Meinstein that I might contact the Chief Rabbi myself, as he was a personal acquaintance.

Chief Rabbi Harris, confirmed his appointment for 7 May but I requested the April use for the Holy Pascha. He graciously said that he would go during the course of that week and remove all items of religious significance, necessary for the deconsecration, to enable us to take the key for use. This occurred, and we proceeded to pay South African Rands 2,000 per month for occupational rental to cover the consumables, until the full purchase price was paid. The road to completion of the contract was not without difficulties, as the attorney for the Synagogue Board emerged as a dishonest character, depositing the EOTC payments in his own personal account. Consequently, we had to engage another attorney to take our rights, which eventually we did, in spite of the second attorney's apparent reluctance to deal severely with a professional colleague.

FUNDRAISING

We fundraised energetically to complete the purchase price. I orchestrated an auction of religious pictures for the first occasion, and in three hours, South African Rands 77,000 was donated. Faithful Ethiopians bid on pictures, and time and again, after acquiring them, donated the same pictures for reauctioning. A similar, second event raised South African Rands 52,000 and a third activity, South African Rands 13,000- word of this last event was not well publicised nor timed.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE SYNAGOGUE INTO A TRADITIONAL ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

The synagogue needed many changes to transform it into a traditional Ethiopian Orthodox Church. These included placement of an altar, iconostasis, crosses and domes. These were all crafted well, as many of the sons of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in South Africa are accomplished tradesmen.

The church hall had no western door and despite my advising continually to open the wall, they remained hesitant.

Early one morning, I went with one of the sons of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and tools and plastering equipment to knock and refashion the wall. In a few hours, a new door was made, providing entry from the western street level, inside the main door, down three steps into the church hall. They then mounted big signs on the building exterior, carrying the name of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church.

Once the full work to transform the synagogue into an ancient African orthodox church was completed, we discovered a marble plaque, mounted to the side of the main entrance. It read: *"The glory of this present house shall be greater than the glory of the*

former house," says the Lord of hosts (Haggai 2:9).

FINANCE NEEDED

I wrote several letters to Abuna Paulos, the EOTC Patriarch, resulting in a full-time priest being sent and in three installments, a total of South African Rands 346,405.97, directly from the Patriarchate towards completion of the purchase. This enabled full and prompt repayment of a "Christian Development Trust" loan of South African Rands 200,000. The purchase price was completed, the bond removed from the title deed, and the title deed bears the name of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in South Africa, registered with the South African Government 31 July 2001.

From April 2001, the EOTC has had a full-time serving priest. From that time also, they requested that the Coptic Orthodox Church send a servant to give a Bible study. Almost every Wednesday since, the Coptic priest has been very regular in his attention to this service, and this is much valued and appreciated by the Ethiopians.

CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH

April 2002, Abuna Paulos came to Johannesburg for the consecration of the holy plate for the altar of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Holy Saviour Church (Amharic: Tsiha Tsion Medhanealem). The Coptic Orthodox Church hosted a banquet in his honour at the Saint Mark Cathedral and Centre in Johannesburg. H.G.s Stefanos and Kyrillos accompanied him and we were blessed to have been able to extend an invitation to the visiting Indian Orthodox Catholicus designate, His Beatitude Thomas Mar Thimothios.



**PATRIARCH DESIGNATE THOMAS MAR TIMOTHEOS PRAYING ON
THE ALTAR OF SAINT MARK CHURCH, JOHANNESBURG, APRIL 2001**



**FATHER M.O. JOHN, THE INDIAN PRIEST FROM KERALA, IN FRONT OF
THE COPTIC CATHEDRAL IN JOHANNESBURG WITH HIS
CONGREGATION IN THE HOLY WEEK APRIL 2002**



**ABOUNA PETROS, THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX BISHOP, WITH
COPTIC ORTHODOX PRIESTS & DEACONS IN FRONT OF THE SAINT
ATHANASIUS THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION, JOHANNESBURG 2001**



**THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHOIR CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS WITH
THE COPTIC ORTHODOX AFRICANS & EGYPTIANS IN ST MARK
CATHEDRAL, JOHANNESBURG 2002**



**FOUNDATION STONE OF SAINT MARK CATHEDRAL, JOHANNESBURG
- BY THE HANDS OF H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III, 23/01/1994**



**COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE: INAUGURATION OF THE BISHOPRIC
HEADQUARTERS, JOHANNESBURG, 23/01/1994**



**31/03/2002 ORDINATION: FATHER ANGELOS (ERNEST NTAMO-
SPENT 2 YEARS IN SHEBEEN) & FATHER MUSA (SAMUEL JIM- SPENT
1 YEAR IN SHEBEEN) AT ST MARK CATHEDRAL, JOHANNESBURG.
APPEAR DEACONS, PREPARING FOR AT COPTIC CENTRE FOR
SCHOLARSHIP**



**4 SA DEACONS: JOSEPH, SIMON, WILLIAM & DAVID, WITH TEACHER
REV. FR MINA AWAD & A U.S. VISITOR SARAH SELIM. ENVISAGED 2
NAMIBIAN & 1 ZIMBABWEAN DEACON WILL SOON JOIN**



**ST MARK COPTIC CATHEDRAL, JOHANNESBURG FULL OF COPTIC
ORTHODOX MEMBERS- GREAT FRIDAY 2002**



**THE INDIAN ORTHODOX PATRIARCH DESIGNATE, THOMAS MAR
TIMOTHEOS, WITH PRIESTS IN BISHOP'S OFFICE,
JOHANNESBURG HEADQUARTERS**



**ST ATHANASIUS THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION IN JOHANNESBURG
CONTAINS LECTURE HALLS & VARIOUS FACILITIES**



**MAIN GATE OF COPTIC
ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL IN
JOHANNESBURG WITH
ILLUMINATED SIGN BOARD &
COPTIC CROSSES**



02/03/2003 H.E. METROPOLITAN KYRIL OF SMOLENSK & KALINGRAD, ENVOY OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, H.E. SERAPHIM, METROPOLITAN OF SA GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH ON OCCASION OF SA CONSECRATION OF ST SERGIUS OF RADONEZH PARISH, RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



17/02/2001, OCCASION OF GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLITAN H.E. SERAPHIM'S ENTHRONEMENT. HE SAID: "WE WOULD LIKE TO WORK IN THE MISSION IN AFRICA WITH THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH."



REV. FR SERGIY RAZZKAZOVSKY, RUSSIAN ORTHODOX PASTOR IN SA, PRESENTING PATRIARCHIAL AWARD FROM H.H. ALEXEI II TO THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH



PATRIARCHAL AWARD & BEAUTIFULLY ADORNED CROSS SENT FROM MOSCOW PATRIARCH TO COPTIC ORTHODOX BISHOP IN JOHANNESBURG AS A TOKEN OF APPRECIATION

THE INDIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE ROLE OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH IN HER ESTABLISHMENT

From the outset of the Coptic Orthodox Church in South Africa in 1992, we were introduced to some devout Indian, orthodox men, women, youth and families. We consistently invited them for baptisms, communion, and youth meetings and to visit them in their homes for Bible studies and other spiritual activities. When an Indian Orthodox priest came from India, they requested my presence when they hired a hall in which to officiate the "Qurbana"- the holy liturgy and communion.

The Coptic Orthodox Church offered all possible means and assistance with preparation of a constitution, registration of the Church with the Government of South Africa and obtaining tax exemption- all were eventually completed.

In spite of their doubts and fears, we encouraged them to look for land. In July 2002, a plot of land was identified in Pretoria as the prospective site for the church. It is ten thousand square metres, and the Coptic Orthodox Church contributed half of the deposit, South African Rands 5,000, as catalyst towards securing the land. In 2003, the full purchase price has been completed and the land, fully registered in the name of the Church, as "the Saint Thomas Orthodox Congregation of South Africa". The congregation is now organising funds for fencing the property, and, we are presently involved in developing and planning the church building.

THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL IS OPEN FOR INDIAN ORTHODOX EASTER CELEBRATIONS

In 2002, Indian Orthodox Easter was observed several weeks before ours and we accommodated a couple of hundred members of the Saint Thomas Orthodox congregation in the Coptic Orthodox

Centre, as they prayed the services of the Great Friday of the Holy Passion Week, the Saturday and Resurrection Feast services with a visiting priest, Father M.O. John from Kerala.

Their experiences in April 2002, praying the crucifixion and resurrection celebrations in the inspiring, spiritual Coptic Orthodox Cathedral, with its wide area, as well as the great welcome by the Coptic Orthodox congregation, motivated them to come again in 2003 in bigger numbers.

Again, they were accommodated in the theological college, preparing fasting meals in the large kitchen and dining room. Their inspiring Malayalam-language songs and prayers were a great joy to us all, and we shared in them by delivering the main sermons on Friday and Sunday of the Risen Lord.

THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

When starting our service in South Africa in 1992, we strove for strong relations with the Greek Orthodox Church, inviting the local Metropolitan to share in our many Christian celebrations and also reiterating our wish to visit him. There was no response at all, apart from his participation in the reception of H.H. Pope Shenouda III in 1997.

The Coptic Orthodox Church in South Africa started to experience a loving relationship of fellowship and brotherhood with the new, Greek Orthodox Metropolitan, Seraphim, who was enthroned 17 March 2001. He is an ecumenical personality, with all sorts of respect and honour for the Coptic Church, her Pope Shenouda III and bishops. On the day of his enthronement he said: "I wish very much to work with the Coptic Orthodox Church in the field of mission in the African continent, as I have heard very much about the experiences of the Bishop for African Affairs over more than a quarter of a century." He looked at me and said: "My dear brother,

Bishop Markos, I would love to learn the fruitful mission and evangelism from you, as we have seen the great expansion and success of the Coptic Church. I am praying that the Lord will bless our relations together with the holy Coptic Church."

The Coptic Orthodox Church introduced the Greek Orthodox Church to the South African Council of Churches, providing letters of recommendation. We also made available a draft constitution and details to enable the Greek's registration with the South African Department of Social Development.

THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Many of the orthodox Serbs, living in Johannesburg, came to the Coptic Orthodox Church, seeking services such as baptism, spiritual guidance and prayers. Intermittently, when they had no priest, they came also to participate in the liturgy and taking communion. We have had several exchange visits with Serbian priests, to maintain strong orthodox ties and expand our united ecumenical efforts.

AFRICAN CHURCHES

-OPPRESSED BY RACISM AND COLONIALISM- APPEAL TO THE AFRICAN MOTHER CHURCH FOR HELP

In December 1983, Pastor Ephraim Hopa, leader of an independent church named "the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Southern Africa", wrote to the Dublin Research Centre at the Irish School of Ecumenics, seeking guidance in identifying an apostolic church that could give his church apostolic ordinations and true Biblical teachings. In response, it was suggested that: he approach "Bishop Markos of the Coptic Orthodox Church... as he has a special

ministry... and heads an institute for the study of black independent churches."¹

While in Kenya, in February 1984, I received a letter sent from Pastor Hopa from Port Elizabeth in South Africa, appealing to the Coptic Orthodox Church to save him and his people from being mistreated by the Anglican Church in the shape of the Church of the Province of South Africa. He spoke of racist victimisation that affected any gathering of Africans at that time. It was clear that they had long-suffered the obstinacy of the western church.

THE HISTORY OF THE ETHIOPIAN CHURCH (IBANDLA LASE TIYOPIYA)

1892, thousands of Africans expressed their desire to form an African orthodox church and established the Ethiopian Church-Ibandla Lase Tiyoپیya.

6 October 1899, the Ethiopian Church was an independent denomination, when, at their Annual General Meeting, they decided to present an application to the Anglican Church, requesting recognition and support:

- ◊ Inclusion of the independent body within the fold of the universal Church
- ◊ Validity of episcopacy and priesthood

While seeking unity within the fold of the universal Church, the Ethiopian Church did not want to be absorbed or transplanted by the Church of the Province of South Africa. Instead, it sought retention of its independent, denominational character.

¹ Unpublished letter from Irish School of Ecumenics to Pastor Ephraim Hopa, 15 December 1983.

In August 1900, the status of the Ethiopian Church was relegated to the subordinate and protected status of an "order" under the perpetual control of the Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA). It became known as the Order of Ethiopia (CPSA)-UmButho wase-Tiyopiya- and was no longer an independent denomination but an ecclesial body within the Church (CPSA) that had enveloped it.

While the Ethiopian Church aimed for ordination of priests and a bishop, this request was flatly refused. Their declaration of a real need for training and education in the original faith of Jesus Christ was met by casual teaching of fourteen Order of Ethiopia leaders in Queenstown. Without doubt, their teaching was Protestant - Anglican. A year later, forty men had more intensive training by Bishop Cameron, but still this bore no resemblance to the orthodox teaching for which they looked.

"In the midst of all of this suppression and arbitrary treatment for some colonial missionaries intent to destroy the existence, and failing which- the absorption of the Ethiopian Church into the CPSA. Imagine!" Pastor Hopa further wrote: " 'Thanks' to those who tried to push down the Ethiopians' throat..." that they are Anglicans. They had reasons for this because they thought that they had won the Order of Ethiopia to become members of the Anglican. However, "... the genius of the Ethiopian Church continued actively within the Order, and gradually, as good relations seemed to develop, Ethiopians wanted to know 'What is this Order?' as referred to the Ethiopian Church. Surely, it's a great sin to God to rob a nation of its identity, aspirations and self-determination".¹

¹ Unpublished notes of Rev. Canon Ephraim Hopa- circa 1983

THE END OF SUFFERINGS AND ENSLAVEMENT

"The 8 May 1983 is historical and significant in the life of the Ethiopian and that of the CPSA. On this day at Grahamstown, innocent blood was spilt terminating 83 years of tutelage (student-tutor relationship) and emerged as a denomination (iHlelo, iBandla, umZi and NOT umButho, originally known as the Ethiopian Church BUT now to be known as the (Independent) Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Southern Africa."¹

Envoys will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God. PSALM 68:31

In a letter dated 18 February 1984,² Reverend Hopa inquired about the Coptic Orthodox Church's approach to apostolic succession:

"In the light of the foregoing reasons and sentiments and present day theological, ecumenical study, doctrinal analysis and thinking, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Southern Africa is now blessed to address itself to a Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church and one who has a special ministry in the study of independent Black Churches to request you in our plight to enlighten us further on what the Church entertains of the transmission of power and authority from one Bishop to another and so on down to the Apostles...."

Surely it will interest you that the founders of the Ethiopian Church in 1892 had in mind and hoped for their Church episcopacy derived through the Eastern Orthodox Church.

¹ Unpublished notes of Rev. Canon Ephraim Hopa- circa 1983

² Unpublished letter from Rev. Canon Ephraim Hopa (South Africa) to H.G. Bishop Antonius Markos (Kenya), Coptic Orthodox Bishopric of African Affairs, dated 18 February 1984

May the same discernment of the Anglican Bishops in 1900 'that this Ethiopian movement (Church) is of God and is guided by the Holy Spirit', inspire the same to you, my Lord, for our request for the consecration of a Bishop by the succession (of the) Coptic Orthodox Church for the continuation in apostolic tradition on the meaning of Acts..."

Our correspondence from that time encouraged them to continue in the same vain, looking for canonical ordinations from the Coptic Orthodox Church. We expressed our preparedness to put ourselves at their complete disposal to facilitate canonical ordinations.

In Reverend Hopa's second letter 2 May 1984¹ he wrote that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Southern Africa gave great thanks to the Lord when they received my response to his first letter. They felt like it was the grace of "a Simon of Cyrene", who helped the Lord carry His cross to Golgotha, and from there to redemption and salvation of the whole world, and to the resurrection and glory.

INTERCEPTION OF CORRESPONDENCE

In a letter dated 29 June 1984, written by Reverend Canon Christopher Hill, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Assistant for Ecumenical Affairs,² he wrote of his knowledge of correspondence between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Southern Africa and the Bishopric of African Affairs of the Coptic Orthodox Church;

¹ Rev. Canon Ephraim Hopa's unpublished letter (South Africa) to H.G. Bishop Antonius Markos (Kenya), Coptic Orthodox Bishopric of African Affairs, 2 May 1984

² Unpublished letter from the Reverend Canon Christopher Hill, The Archbishop of Canterbury's Assistant for Ecumenical Affairs, Lambeth Palace, London, to H.G. Bishop Antonius Markos, Coptic Orthodox Bishop of African Affairs, Nairobi, Kenya date 29 June 1984.

"I believe that you have been in correspondence with a Mr. Ephraim Ntshebe of Cape Province, South Africa. I know that he wishes to receive Episcopal consecration from you. I also realise that you will put before him the appropriate apostolic disciplines of the Coptic Church. You may be aware that he led a breakaway movement from the Order of Ethiopia in the Anglican Church of the Province of Southern Africa. The Order of Ethiopia was created as a special order to recognise the particular contribution of the black peoples within that Anglican province."

Reverend Hill further suggested that I may wish to communicate with the Anglican Archbishop of the CPSA on this subject. It seemed that the Anglican Church wished to prohibit the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Southern Africa from having contact with any other church.

THE APOSTOLIC TEACHING IS THE FOUNDATION OF EVERYTHING

From the first letter of our correspondence, I focused on the necessity of apostolic teaching, theology, dogma, seven sacraments and how they should be practised in a righteous and correct, canonical way.

As it was difficult for me to travel to South Africa in 1984, due to the inability to access visas at that time, I invited two members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Southern Africa to come for six month's teaching to stay with us in Nairobi. We were prepared to cover all other expenses if travel expenses were met. Reverend Ephraim Hopa and Reverend Ephraim Ntshebe heartily welcomed this invitation and started to collect funds for travel.

Suddenly, their communication was cut for more than six months, and it was confirmed that some evil elements in the South African

THE ETHIOPIAN CHURCH - IBANDLA LASE TIYQPIYA 1892

AND

THE ORDER OF ETHIOPIA - UMBUTHO WETYALIKE YOPHONDO (CPSA) 1900

Before August 1900 the Ethiopian Church - IBandla lase-Tiyopiya, was an independent denomination in its own right.

In August 1900 the status of the Ethiopian Church was relegated to that of an Order within the Church of the Province (CPSA).

Look at the meaning of the word 'Order' as it is applied and refers to the Order of Ethiopia - UmButho wase-Tiyopiya.



IRISH SCHOOL OF ECUMENICS

DUBLIN RESEARCH CENTRE,

Box House, 20 Feenahogue Park, Dublin 4, Ireland.

Tel. (01) 884960/883075

15th December 1965

Dear Ephraim,

Many thanks for the materials you sent me. I am now in a position to give you a number of suggestions, none of which would necessitate your coming to Europe.

In my first response to you I mentioned my misgivings to you about trying to view apostolic succession as a tactile transmission of power and authority from one bishop to another, and so on down to the apostles. There are theological and historical difficulties with such a position, not least of which is the fact that there is within that sense of transmission no uniform concept of episcopate or episcopacy. To try to help the churches clarify this issue, the recent report on Ministry which was adopted by the Faith and Order Commission at Lima, made a useful distinction between 'apostolic succession' and 'apostolic tradition' (succession in the tradition/faith of the apostles). It is this succession in the apostolic tradition of the church which is seen to be essential. I would therefore suggest that on the basis of this there is no need to seek one whose line of succession can be authenticated.

In my previous letter I told you of the steps I was taking to help you with your request. My confidante was one who is close to the Archbishop of Canterbury. In writing to him I did mention the Lima Report's distinction as outlined above. His response was that this is a useful way for you to proceed. Namely to accept this theological position, and on that basis seek relations with another Anglican community (or episcopal church). He has suggested that you might like to be in communication with Archbishop Philip Rensell to help you resolve your difficulties.

It may be, however, that that line of approach is not one that you can adopt for either political or ecclesiastical political reasons. In that case you might find it helpful to contact Bishop Markos of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Nairobi (P.O. Box 21970, Nairobi). He has a special ministry, I am informed, and heads an institute for the study of black independent churches. Indeed, whatever approach you adopt, I suggest you make contact with him.

I shall await your reactions to these suggestions, one of which I hope might enable your church to overcome its problems. If none of these is acceptable, then other lines of enquiry will need to be pursued.

Every good wish,
Yours aye,

Ala.

Rev. H.L.C. Ntshabe,
36 Tsebe Street,
Bridgville 6205,
Cape Province,
Fort Elizabeth,
South Africa

P.S. Chris Ellis is due to be married in Selby Abbey in July 1966. Hope that you are able to maintain your theological interest.

post office took note of the Kenyan stamps, apparently forwarding the letters to the Anglican Church.

In addition to the letter of 29 June 1984, the Anglicans wrote to me 28 December 1984, suggesting again that I should only interact with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Southern Africa through the Anglican Archbishop of South Africa.

Reverend Hopa wrote in his letter 3 March 1985 that it was "a Miracle" that put his Church in contact with the Coptic Orthodox Church so that we could be sufferers of Christ together in our service in Africa. He also provided us with a different address, far from the original, to avoid our further correspondence being intercepted by interlopers.

MANY ACTIVE STEPS TAKEN TO ENABLE NAIROBI TRAVEL

After strenuous efforts in South Africa, the two reverends were given travel documents but no passports. These were unavailable to "black" residents in South Africa during the apartheid era, and their travel documents indicated that their citizenship was "undetermined."

31 January 1986, the Bishopric of African Affairs presented the two reverends visa applications to the Department of Immigration in Nairobi. After a prolonged delay, they were refused, even though at that time black leaders of all of the western churches were having no difficulties securing relevant visas to participate in their conferences. Perhaps the refusal was because of one African Church stretching out its hand to another African Church, or because of an awareness that the Coptic Orthodox Church originated in Egypt, and the Egyptian Government was a great sponsor of all of the African liberation movements.

THE CHURCH LEADERS PRESS FOR QUICK ORDINATIONS

A long time passed and we had been unable to meet due to mutual inability to obtain visas and travel during apartheid, and its cruelty. I kept encouraging; that after a long night there should be sunrise.

They informed me that my letters were being read before their large gatherings, inspiring them to continually seek the Apostolic and African Church. Through my correspondence they also stressed that they had felt "the presence of God is true"; that 'we are crying together in a loud voice saying, "God is our Father and the Coptic Orthodox Church is our Mother;" ' that the "Coptic Orthodox Church is the Church of the (African) soil."

They emphasised our need to strive for means to extend the service of the Coptic Orthodox Church to South Africa, rendering a charitable service full of love for the oppressed and persecuted; that they looked for victory and freedom at the hands of the greatest liberator, our Lord Jesus, who found peace when he fled into Africa to escape the contemporary political persecution, as the prophet said: *Out of Egypt (Africa) I called my son* (Matthew 2:16)

IMPOSSIBLE TO ORDAIN PRIESTS OR DEACONS IN A QUICK VISIT

Their rites, prayers, books, songs and uniforms emerged as fully Protestant- Anglican. Even their baptisms were by sprinkling or pouring water, without any preparation in the apostolic tradition. Also, their communion was only symbolic, made for commemoration, not through the dwelling of the Holy Spirit. Polygamy proliferated and their marriages were devoid of the work of the Holy Spirit, uniting two into one body. They felt no need to adjust any of this according to the canons of the Apostolic Church, believing also that priesthood could be ordained simply through the laying of the hands of the bishop, without any necessity of

appropriate preparation.

For all these reasons, I was convinced that a short visit of a few days only were insufficient to prepare any servants for any rank of priesthood.

IN HASTE: A VISITING ETHIOPIAN BISHOP GIVES EVERYTHING REQUESTED

By the end of 1991, I received a letter, informing that a visiting bishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of America hastily gave all that had been requested. Abouna Yesehaq (Isaac) of the Diocese of the Province of Western America arrived in South Africa, 3 August 1990, supposedly to affiliate the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Southern Africa with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church worldwide. It later emerged that this Archbishop had effected everything in his personal capacity, not in his ecclesiastical power. At that time, Ethiopia was under the rule of the dictator, Mengistu Haillie Mariam, who also assigned a patriarch, Abouna Mercurios, who led the Church in the same dictatorial manner. When Mengistu, who ruled Ethiopia from 12 September 1974, was removed in 1992, Ethiopians requested the removal of Abouna Mercurios as well. 12 July 1992, the patriarch Abouna Paulos was enthroned.

ETHIOPIAN BISHOP CLAIMS ORDINATION OF TWELVE DEACONS AS STEP TOWARDS THEIR PRIESTHOOD

Great eagerness to belong to an ancient apostolic church, led to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Southern Africa's precipitate acceptance, without appropriate scrutiny. Reverend Hopa wrote to me that the "the acts of affiliation effecting the admission of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church into ... the Ethiopian Orthodox Church worldwide" was performed.

They were unaware that Archbishop Yesehaq did not represent the

Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in Addis Ababa. While he was the bishop of one diocese in the United States, he had no authority to affiliate a church in South Africa to the Mother Church in Ethiopia. He himself was separated from Addis Ababa.

The letter further said that Abouna Yesehaq was expected to visit South Africa the following year and then he would "among other things ordain the deacons to priesthood." I was really bemused at how an orthodox bishop from a traditional church could give the sacraments of the Church, including priesthood, to people who had not entered the apostolic church from the door of baptism and the holy unction.

OFFICIAL BISHOPS OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH REFUTE THE AUTHORITY OF ARCHBISHOP YESEHAQ

September-October 1992, there was an All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe. Many churches were represented and there was a delegation of five, archbishops and bishops, from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. The Ethiopians requested a meeting with me, and asked about the independent Xhosa-speaking Church from Port Elizabeth that had been visited by Abouna Yesehaq. I explained that I had been in communication with the Church since 1984, and they acknowledged that Abouna Yesehaq had not acted in accordance with apostolic tradition or the Church laws, nor with cognisance of the Holy Synod. They asked that I send them some of the Church documents from the historical records, and I did so.

REVEREND HOPA DECLARES HIMSELF LIKE KAHINAT

In December 1991, I received a letter from Reverend Hopa, in which he referred to himself as Like Kahinat, meaning "the chief priest" in the Amharic language.

PERSONAL MEETING WITH BISHOP EPHRAIM HOPA

When I met Rev. Ephraim Hopa for the first time, 14 May 1993, in the House of the Resurrection in Port Elizabeth, he introduced himself as Bishop Hopa. I did not know whether he had given himself these titles of "Like Kahinat" and "Bishop", or whether Abouna Yesehaq had bestowed these titles on him when he ordained twelve priests without any preparation or training. He had spent only one week, accommodated in a five-star hotel, and had reportedly been provided with lots of money and gifts.

I spoke to Hopa very openly about those priests who had been ordained by Abouna Yesehaq; that they were not canonical in the universal, orthodox Church because their ordination did not take the canonical way, according to the apostolic tradition. I reminded him of our prolific correspondence, over years, about preparing the Church in the proper sacramental order, and about education and training in orthodoxy; that orthodox priesthood should never be based on praxis or doctrine of a Protestant church. Furthermore, I related the rejection of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Holy Synod members that I had met in Harare in 1992.

He welcomed all of this information, inviting me to come twelve hundred kilometres from Johannesburg to Port Elizabeth to teach his priests the true orthodox way in a series of retreats of two to three days. I flew to Port Elizabeth multiple times during 1993-1994 to spend two to three days at a time, whatever the expenses, lecturing and orientating to the true orthodox way.

Deacons and priests were not content to have a few hours every month in lectures, and so they started to find their way to our Coptic Orthodox Headquarters in Parkview, where they spent several days at a time being taught. They asked multitudes of questions and asked to witness how the sacraments were being practised, especially baptism and confirmation and the holy communion in the

divine liturgy. They became very inspired by the orthodox rites that they saw. Their visits continue until the present time, where there is continuing participation in the New Year's Eve, the Christmas Eve, the Week of Passion, the Eve of the Resurrection Feast, seminars, youth meetings, and priestly meetings.

ABOUNA PAULOS' VISIT IN APRIL 2001

When the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church was established in Johannesburg in 1999, Bishop Petros, the Ethiopian Bishop visited Port Elizabeth several times. I gave him a full briefing on their unorthodox background; that he should work on correcting their situation from the sacramental perspective, and also from the domination of Protestant doctrine.

Abouna Paulos travelled to Port Elizabeth for one day in April 2001, while he was visiting South Africa for the consecration of the Ethiopian Church in Johannesburg. After this, he decided to send four professors or teachers from Addis Ababa to spend six months to try to convert the Port Elizabethans to true orthodoxy. They arrived in September 2001, continuing until April 2002.

They were:

- Melake Tabor Teshome Zerihun
- Abba Fikremariam Tadesse
- Melake Selam Dagnachew Kassahun
- Like Kahinat Haile Sellassie Alemayehu

The four teachers came to our Coptic Orthodox Headquarters on several occasions, to liaise with me and to take the blessings of the Saint Mark Cathedral. They complained bitterly that the members of

the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Southern Africa had great difficulty learning anything new from the Protestant teachings that they had absorbed over the preceding years. Also, they spoke of the widespread problem of polygamy, which is not easy to solve.

When they visited some of our Coptic Orthodox branches in the "black" townships, where they met Coptic priests who had been trained in Egypt, they were surprised by the great change that was apparent in their lives and the wealth of their orthodox understanding in efficiently praying the liturgy and performing the other sacraments.

STARTING WITH THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH IS THE GREATEST HOPE FOR TRUE ORTHODOXY WITHIN THIS CHURCH

We tried to convince the professors of teaching the children while they are still young, when they receive the orthodox milk, starting training in prayers virtually from the crib. They felt that such a mission was enormously difficult, and they returned to Addis Ababa with a view to explaining to the Ethiopian Patriarch, the exigencies of converting those African Orthodox from Anglicanism.

SUDDEN SERIOUS VISIT OF THE LEADERS OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA TO THE COPTIC ORTHODOX BISHOPRIC OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS IN JOHANNESBURG

Ephraim Hopa departed from this world in February 1999, may the Lord repose his blessed soul, and the leadership of the Church was handed to new men bearing similar Anglicised Amharic titles.

A delegation of six, visited the Parkview Headquarters unexpectedly, 9 and 10 December 2002, eagerly requesting a meeting to submit their requests. They comprised: Reverend

Barnabas N.C. Gojela- Deputy Like Kahinat; Mr Fikile Jacobs- Secretary; Mr Mzukisi January- Coordinator; and two more priests- Reverends Wolde Dawit M.S. Gxogxo and Wolde Selassie D.N. Yalisa.

They presented five requests to "Mother Church", as they referred to the Coptic Orthodox Church:

- ◇ The Coptic Bishop of African Affairs, should return to Port Elizabeth to teach all the deacons and priests of the Church regularly.
- ◇ The Coptic Orthodox Church should avail its training resources and facilities to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Southern Africa, offering access to theological instruction and training at the Coptic Orthodox Centre in Johannesburg.
- ◇ The Bishop of African Affairs should arrange for scholarship in Egypt for some of their youth for periods ranging from one to three years, as has occurred with many other Africans of the Coptic Orthodox Church.
- ◇ An assurance should be secured that the door of the Coptic Orthodox Church is still open- even up to affiliation.

They video filmed the Saint Mark Cathedral, including the altars, baptismal fonts, iconostasis and the theological institution, and an interview with me in which I assured them of the continuing preparedness of the Coptic Orthodox Church to assist their transformation into the authentic apostolicity of orthodoxy.

Our responses were all loving and positive, and the delegation, with their three-hour video, took back a very good idea of the training of our African deacons, who are dwelling with us in the Coptic Centre.

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
REPUBLIEK VAN SUID-AFRIKA
RÉPUBLIQUE D'AFRIQUE DU SUD

DOCUMENT FOR TRAVEL PURPOSES
DOKUMENT VIR REISDOELEINDES
DOCUMENT DE VOYAGE

PE 0034026

Nationality \diamond Nasionaliteit
Nationalité

UNDETERMINED / ONBEPAALD

DESCRIPTION OF BEARER \diamond BESKRYWING VAN HOUER
SIGNALEMENT DU TITULAIRE

Name Naam Nom	<u>HOPA: EPHRAIM LANETON NZAMO</u>		
Place and date of birth Plek en datum van geboorte Lieu et date de naissance	SUID-AFRIKA SOUTH AFRICA		1907-10-02
Height Lengte Taille	1,58 m	Colour of eyes Kleur van oë Couleur des yeux	BROWN BRUIN
		Colour of hair Kleur van hare Couleur des cheveux	BLACK GREY SWART GRYS
Sex Geslag Sexe	M	Residence Woonplek Domicile	SUID-AFRIKA SOUTH AFRICA
		Identity number Identiteitsnommer Le numéro de l'acte d'identité	2585821

THE SAINT MARK COPTIC ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL - JOHANNESBURG

It has been propagated in South African Christian circles that until the year 2000, Johannesburg had four Christian cathedrals. The Saint Mark Coptic Orthodox Cathedral became the most recent, and the fifth.

The gift of God- the 5100 square metres of land-, which were identified in 1991 in Parkview, Johannesburg, afforded great potential for the development of a cathedral and theological college. Added to this in the year 2000, were 1020 square metres.

H.H. Pope Shenouda III blessed the land on his first visit to Johannesburg, laying the foundation stone of the Saint Mark Cathedral 23 January 1994. It was a dignified and magnificent moment, attended by church leaders, including the Ambassador of the Vatican, the Mayor of Johannesburg, and various other statesmen. On the same day, H.H. inaugurated the main residential building of the Bishopric, which had previously accommodated the Hellenic College, and consecrated the small Saint Mark Church that occupied three old classrooms, also of the main building.

As the numbers of South African Church members started to increase, the number of township parishes reached twelve. We felt the need of a large, central cathedral that would enable us to gather everyone together for celebration of feasts, maximal participation in workshops and conferences, and for ordination of new priests.

COMMENCEMENT OF CATHEDRAL AND THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION CONSTRUCTION

We were unable to start construction of the cathedral until 23 January 1997 because the main residential building was in need of extensive renovations; we had been preoccupied with construction

of the township churches, and vocational training centres and simultaneous constructions in Namibia and Zimbabwe.

It should be mentioned that the five domes of the cathedral, and the accompanying light towers, were constructed by the builder Ibrahim, who came from Menoufia and a family specialising in these kinds of edifices in the Egyptian monasteries. He stayed in South Africa for four full months, and the results testify to his superlative expertise.

The cathedral was incomplete in the year 2000, when we used it for the Christmas liturgy. After that, we completed the Carrara marble altars and baptismal fonts- made in Egypt and assembled in Johannesburg by Egyptian artisans. The cathedral floor was covered in beautiful ceramics that were a gift from Mr Kyrillos Hakim of the El Amir Co. in Egypt. May the Lord reward him and all that were involved. Next, the iconostasis and the icons were completed.

The light towers' building of the Church was commenced 25 March 1998, according to the true Coptic rite. It frames the main entrance to the Church premises, leading into a parking area, in compliance with a local government ordinance.

The construction of the theological institution was delayed because of baseless objections from the Parkview neighbourhood. In response to the dissenters, we had to go through a local government tribunal, through which we took the full right to proceed as the objections proved lame.

The theological institution was built on the land occupied by a swimming pool in the old Greek school. It is 300 square metres, with 180 upstairs for sleeping, and separate accommodation for males and females. The entire lower floor is for lectures and workshops.

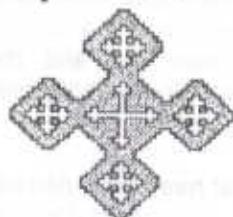
The Coptic Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Mark has become a great place of interest for visitors to Johannesburg- Christians and non-

Christians alike. They are fascinated by the art of the icons and iconostasis, the marble baptismal fonts and altars, and the carved American oak doors. The traditional architecture has become the subject of widespread approval, and the cathedral's and light towers' adornment with illuminated blue crosses render them visible from inspiring distances.

The Saint Mark Cathedral has been utilised for numerous meetings, including: South African Council of Churches dealing with poverty eradication and HIV/ AIDS programming; the Church Leaders Forum- provincial church leaders meeting to discuss cooperative relationships to meet challenges of all kinds, ranging from education to crime.

Many people have arranged to spend a retreat time at the Coptic Centre, where they experience a deep spirituality, peace and simple, comfortable facilities.

Chapter Seven



OUR FATHERS THE APOSTLES

As

**Change Agents in
People's Lives**

**"Do not be conformed to this
world, but be transformed by the
renewing of your mind."**

Romans 12:2

THE CHANGE IN THE LIVES OF THE DISCIPLES AND APOSTLES

Instead of being the purveyor of yet another earthly and human philosophy, our Lord Jesus came to fill the world with His grace, by which He could save the whole of humanity. He chose His twelve disciples from simple, unknown and poor people, like fishermen and tax collectors. They had the potential to be completely transformed through their devoted obedience to the Holy Spirit. After realization of this, they became the agents of change in others' lives.

Our Lord Jesus' discipleship- during the first three years and four months before His crucifixion, and then on the Tiberias seashore forty days after His resurrection- tremendously changed His disciples. They learned practical lessons, making it possible for them to wash one another's, and the catechumen's feet, and to embrace apostleship with humility, love and sacrifice rather than tyrannical dictatorship. They were able to take off the old man and put on the new.

The discipleship of the Holy Spirit and His dwelling in the disciples, gave them new tongues and power to witness in Jerusalem, the whole of Judea, Samaria and until the ends of the earth. Their changed hearts, souls and minds enabled them, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to change others' lives, continually struggling- even up to the shedding of their own blood.

So many questions have been asked, whether the mission of the Coptic Orthodox Church has really changed Africans and if the change is a façade or actually towards an orthodox life. Many historical writings have spoken of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the time of the apostles, and of those who followed them, including missionaries, various servants, deacons, and deaconesses. Patriarchs, bishops and other clergy and laity have told of Christianity's spread, and the apostles' evangelistic activities.

All of the following have been considered:

- ◊ Factors in pre-Christian times that opened the way for Christianity
- ◊ The apostles' lives in their mission field
- ◊ The situation, place and timing of evangelistic efforts

THE MANY PROFOUND CHANGES EXPERIENCED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, RESULTING FROM THE EVANGELISM OF OUR FATHERS THE APOSTLES

The apostles' mission not only impacted on individuals but on whole societies as well. Those contemporaries included Jews, unbelievers, Romans- ensconced by philosophy and their hedonistic way of life, and Greeks- with their patriotism and exclusive Hellenic culture. Injustice, cruelty and slavery abounded with men despising each other to the extent of one brother being the ruler of another in a master-slave relationship. The Roman Empire in which the Christian gospel spread comprised 25% masters and 75% slaves.

Interminable struggle, violence, death, heroism, perpetual travel, sleeplessness, fasting, prayer, and the shedding of rivers of tears, sweat and blood were some of the salient marks of the apostles' lives. Whatever the sacrifice, they had hearts overflowing with the proclamation of our Lord's resurrection and the spread of the message of salvation.

The choicest fruits of their evangelistic journeys were manifest in a widespread conversion of almost the whole of humankind in which:

- ◊ People moved from the ties of the ancient Law to the grace and truth in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

- ◊ Those living in darkness started walking in the Light of eternal life
- ◊ The sea of death was traversed and the shore of salvation and redemption hailed freedom for the sons of God
- ◊ Bonds were severed, shackles broken and slaves were freed
- ◊ Blind eyes were opened
- ◊ Bodies living in superficial lusts were purified and uplifted to a temple of the Holy Spirit, sanctified through the dwelling of the Body and Blood of our Lord
- ◊ Holy Spirit gifts were imparted- healing, power, sonship, remission and the ability to heal and save others from the evil spirits of the world
- ◊ Multitudes of people were glorified, sanctified and purified to become true members of the Body of Christ

THE CHURCH MISSION WORK IN ALL AGES

Studying the immense changes that occurred in the first and early Christian centuries provides us with great proof that mission has been led by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church can still have the same impact in changing a lowly state of mind in man to one of a high degree of spiritual purity, settling his soul and developing his greatness, as the fruits of the apostles' mission continue to have bearing on our lives today.

African evangelism has positively affected the mission mind of the worldwide Coptic Orthodox Church, including the understanding and orientation of massive numbers of Egyptians. The great shift

amongst Copts over the past twenty-five years is irrefutable, unless one adopts a limited view of the world from the confines of pastoral care.

CHANGES IN AFRICA THROUGH COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH MISSION WITHIN THE LAST TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS

◊ HISTORICAL

Before 1976, there were no other Coptic Orthodox Churches outside Egypt, except those in northern Africa, and the Horn, including- Sudan, Ethiopia, plus contemporary Eritrea. Apart from these, the Coptic Orthodox Church is now in ten other African countries- a situation that has never existed, until now, in the past twenty centuries.

◊ CHRISTIAN

The Coptic Orthodox Church presence is felt amongst other religions across the length and breadth of the African continent.

◊ ORTHODOX

Christian orthodoxy and its apostolicity have been firmly placed over the entire map of Christianity in Africa.

◊ SHIFT FROM A PASTORAL MINDSET

Many have been enabled to extend their mindset to include mission and the pastoral service.

◊ ECCLESIASTICAL AND ACCESS TO WORSHIP

Service and spiritual books have been translated into seventeen African languages, bringing these closer to the hearts of the people.

◇ CHURCH LEADERSHIP AND MISSION SUPPORT

The Church leadership accords the mission its due and appropriate support, through consecration from the best kind of servants.

◇ MEMBERSHIP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

voice, saying, "Salvation [belongs] to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! (Revelation 7:9,10)

From the mission's beginnings in 1976, how much it has suffered doubters, mockers, uninformed spectators, critics- those who were unable to grasp the concept of evangelism, those who solicited for their own benefits, those who chose silence to condemn and escape, those who have despised their fellow men and mongered rumours in self-absorbed negativity. However, how this mission has been strengthened, by those who are enlightened by the spirit of evangelism, and admired by those faithful hearts that are full of love for people who may be impoverished and far from our communities, and who may be from diverse: nations, ethnicities, skin pigments and vernaculars! How exemplary are they who are ever mindful of our Lord's words: *And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock [and] one shepherd (John 10:16)!*

THE SPIRIT OF EVANGELISM

Every day, our faith is that the Paraclete- the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, sent by the Son and proceeding from the Father - works continually in the Church through the sacraments. The Life-giving Lord gave us new birth and His dwelling in man. He forgives and absolves, changing the bread and wine for our union with the Body and Blood of Christ. He heals all the psychological, physical, and spiritual sicknesses through the unction of the sick. He unites husband and wife in holy matrimony and gives the gifts of priesthood and bishopric. He reminds and rebukes, leads and

teaches. He is the Spirit of evangelism, Who dwelt in the disciples on the day of Pentecost, endowing them with the spirit of daring, bravery, knowledge, tongues and endurance for witness and even, martyrdom. He also gave them power through the Word, leading them in the way of evangelism.

There is no doubt that evangelism has continued through the ages by the power of His actions, thoughts and commandments:

- ◇ *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15)*
- ◇ *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you... (Matthew 28:19,20)*
- ◇ *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)*
- ◇ *And He gave "some to be evangelists some to be prophets some to be preachers and some to be pastors and shepherds." (Eph. 4:11)*
- ◇ *For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! (1 Cor. 9:16)*

THE POWER THAT WORKED IN THE EARLY APOSTLES AND EVANGELISTS

The same power is working at all times. It can never die; will never

get old; has to be renewed daily; is able to penetrate, pinch and break the heart, mind and soul to give birth for the kingdom of God. Souls are renewed through birth by Water and Spirit- beyond nature- and in this way can yield more than one can ever imagine:

"For My thoughts [are] not your thoughts, Nor [are] your ways My ways," says the Lord" For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper [in] [the] [thing] for which I sent it. "For you shall go out with joy, And be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, And all the trees of the field shall clap [their] hands. (Isaiah 55:9-12).

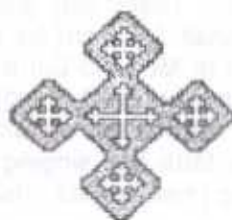
THE DANGER OF EXPECTING A QUICK CHANGE

Those who doubted the power of the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of evangelism in old times are not different from the doubters of today. We need, all, to remember that the Lord Jesus said: *The words that I speak to you are spirit, and [they] are life* (John 6:63).

The Holy Spirit leaves the book of Acts open. It is not completed with the word: "Amen". These writings, recorded by saints- the people inside whom God worked- are inspired by the Holy Spirit. Their acts and deeds are continuing in the pope and patriarch of the Church, the archbishops, bishops, and in those who extend pastoral care, and evangelistic service that was delivered through the naissance of the Church on the day of the Pentecost.

The book of Acts tells us about the incalculably hard work- blood, sweat and tears- of the evangelists, showing us the Way and

proclaiming the kingdom of God. It also acquaints us with the extent of changes throughout God's creation from one end of the world to the other. We serve as part of its successive completion, until the second coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when according to our faith, the book will ultimately conclude with the word: "Amen".



THE DANGER OF TRYING A QUICK CLIMB

A man who wanted the power of the Jews, "the chief priests," came to experiment in his house and had a ladder from the garden of Gethsemane to the roof of the temple. The ladder was made of ropes and was fixed to the roof by a hook.

The story again is in the book of Acts when it is told that when the word came, there were many who were baptized. The people who were baptized were not only men but also women. These men and women were coming to the house and looking at the things that were written in the book and looking at the things that were written in the book. The things that were written in the book were the things that were written in the book. The things that were written in the book were the things that were written in the book.

The book of Acts tells us about the wonderful things that were done by the apostles. The book of Acts tells us about the wonderful things that were done by the apostles. The book of Acts tells us about the wonderful things that were done by the apostles.

Annexes

1. The Bishoprics, Cathedrals, Churches, and Training Centres Established by the Bishopric of African Affairs, through the Power of God, from 11 January, 1976 up to 11 January, 2003
2. Some Ecumenical Collaborations of the Coptic Orthodox Church
3. Some Governmental and Other Official Entities with which the Coptic Orthodox Church has Participated
4. A Spiritual Page in History by Father Bisenty Abdel-Messih Gerges, Priest of Saint George's Church in Vancouver
5. A Message from Dr. Nabil Nakhla Mankarious- Coptic, Former Pharmacist in Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe
6. Languages to which the Agpeya, Prayer of Raising the Incense, Saint Basil's Liturgy, and Prayers of Sacramental Services have been Translated
7. The Official Certificate of Registration of the Coptic Church in the Country of Ghana

1. The Bishoprics, Cathedrals, Churches, and Training Centres Established by the Bishopric of African Affairs, Through the Power of God, from 11 January, 1976 up to 11 January, 2003

THE EAST AFRICAN REGION

Kenya

1. The Headquarters of the Coptic Orthodox Bishopric, Nairobi, June 1983
2. The Saint Mark Coptic Orthodox Cathedral, Nairobi, 1985; consecrated by H.H. Pope Shenouda III (H.H.), January 1994
3. The Monastery of Saint Anthony the Great, Nairobi, 1979; church foundation stone laid by H.H., 1979 (church currently vacant)
4. The Coptic Hospital in Nairobi with 40 inpatient beds, outpatient clinic, and surgical operations theatre; started in 1990; inaugurated by H.H., January 1994
5. The Nairobi Vocational Training Centre, July 1984; 30 sewing machines donated by H.H. to the graduates, January 1984; More than 100 machines donated to the graduates since 1984
6. Saint Mark Church, Kinyuwi, Ukambani; services started, 1976; H.H. laid the foundation stone, October 1979; building complete, 1982; vocational training centre and preschool, both established in 1990
7. Saint Luke Church, Misseleni, Ukambani started 1980, completed 1982

8. Saint Demiana Church, Katheka, Ukambani; services started in 1978; building completed, 1980
9. The Cathedral of the Virgin Saint Mary and Saint Mary's House, Nyamasaria, Nyanza in the capital town of Kisumu; services started, 1980; building completed, 1985
10. Saint Luke Church, Gombe, Western Province; services started, 1982; building completed, 1986
11. Saint Mina Monastery, Maseno, near the Equator; services started, 1976; monastery building completed, 1985; Saint Moses the Black Church completed, 1990
12. Saint Tekle Haimanot the Ethiopian Church, Uradi, Nyanza; building completed, 1988
13. Saint George Church, Lela, Nyanza, 1992
14. Saint Moses the Black Church, East Murungiya, Nyanza; building completed, 1993
15. Saint Mark Church, Rongai Nakuru, Rift Valley; services started, 1983; building completed 1989
16. The Virgin Saint Mary Church, Piavi Nakuru, Rift Valley; services started, 1985; building completed, 1984

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGION

South Africa

1. The Headquarters of the Coptic Orthodox Bishopric, Parkview, Johannesburg; acquired, 31 August, 1992; started its activity, 6 October, 1992; first Coptic Orthodox Church established within, 1 January, 1993; consecrated by H.H., January 1994
2. Saint Mark Coptic Orthodox Cathedral, Parkview, Johannesburg; foundation stone laid by H.H., 1994; construction began, 1997; completed, 1999
3. Saint Mark Church, Parys, Free State; services started, January 1993; completed, 1994; consecrated by H.H., 1995; construction of a vocational training centre, in progress

2003

4. Saint Mark Church, Guguletu, Cape Town; old church inherited from the African Orthodox Church, 1993; foundation stone of Dr Moufeed Rhageb Vocational Training Centre and the consecration of the church by H.H., 1995; centre inaugurated, 1997
5. Saint Mark Coptic Orthodox Church, Nongoma, KwaZulu, Natal; foundation stone laid by H.H., 1995; consecrated by H.H., 1997; foundation stone of the training centre, 1997; centre completed, 1999
6. Saint George Church, Soshanguve, Gauteng; services started in a tin house, 1993; building completed and consecrated by H.H., 1997; priest's residence completed 2002; construction of vocational training centre, started 2003
7. Saint Paul Church, Vosloorus, services started in garage, 1993; completed and consecrated by H.H., 1997
8. The Virgin Saint Mary Church, Tembisa, Gauteng; services started in a garage, 1993; church completed and consecrated by H.H., 1997; priest's residence completed 2003
9. Virgin Saint Mary Church Mvunyane, Natal; services started, 1997; building completed, 2000
10. Saint John Church, Makapanstaad, Gauteng; small old church inherited; renovation beginning, 2003
11. Saint Athanasius Church, Mogogello, Gauteng; services started, March 2002; an old church building currently exists; to be transformed to the Coptic Orthodox rite, 2003; pastor of church sent to Egypt for one year scholarship; after which prospective ordination
12. Saint Athanasius the Apostolic Theological Institute, Parkview, Johannesburg; building completed, 2001; contains 180 square metres of upper floor accommodation; four South African student deacons currently in residence; through God's Grace, two Namibian deacons and one Zimbabwean soon to enrol; following successful training,



CARLETONVILLE IS THE NEW, 11TH BRANCH IN SOUTH AFRICA. REV. FR MOUSSA JIM & HIS PEOPLE ERECTED THE TEMPORARY BUILDING FROM WOOD & IRON SHEETS ON NEWLY BOUGHT COPTIC ORTHODOX LAND. FR MOUSSA APPEARS WITH HIS FAMILY



THE INSIDE OF THE TEMPORARY CHURCH IN CARLETONVILLE, ERECTED 2002. THE PERMANENT CHURCH CONSTRUCTION WILL START ONCE AUTHORITIES PRODUCE THE TITLE DEED.



THE OLD AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN PARYS MADE FROM WOOD & IRON SHEETS. IN 1993, AT TIME OF AFFILIATION OF CHURCH, BECAME ST MARK COPTIC CHURCH IN PARYS.



CHURCH IN PARYS, FREE STATE, FROM WITHIN. BISHOP RAISING INCENSE AMONGST THE CONGREGATION. REV. FR ATHANASIOS MAKHALIMA APPEARS IN LOWER RIGHT HAND CORNER. THE HEAT IN SUCH A STRUCTURE CAN BE UNBEARABLE IN SUMMER.



1996, NEW COPTIC CHURCH IN PARYS WITH A LARGE GATHERING OF PRIESTS, DEACONS & CONGREGANTS IN ANNUAL GENERAL YOUTH & SUNDAY SCHOOL CONFERENCE. CHURCH CONSECRATED IN AUGUST 1995 BY H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III.



CHRISTMAS VACATION: 2001-2002. CHANGING THE SPIRITUAL LIFE: CHILDREN'S CONFERENCE ATTENDED BY MORE THAN 100, AFTER BY YOUTH CONFERENCE 100+ YOUTH FROM ALL SA BRANCHES, 22 AUSTRALIAN YOUTH, UNDER LEADERSHIP OF GIFTED YOUTH SERVANT MS DEBBIE ARMANIOUS, SHARED.



TSONGA-SPEAKING PEOPLE OF SAINT ATHANASIOUS CHURCH AT MOGOGELLO. PEOPLE & PASTOR JOINED COPTIC CHURCH 2002. FAR LEFT, REV. JOHANNES MALULEKE IS PRESENTLY ON SCHOLARSHIP IN EGYPT.



NEW SIGN BOARD TO BE PUT ON MOGOGELLO CHURCH AT ITS RENOVATION & TRANSFORMATION INTO ORTHODOX COPTIC STYLE- PLANNED COMPLETION IN 2003



**SAINT MARK COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH IN ONDANGWA, NAMIBIA
WAS ESTABLISHED IN 2000. IT HAS AN ACTIVE MISSION AMONGST
NAMIBIANS, SERVED BY REV. SAMUEL BOULOS**



**DOCTOR MORAD NASSIF & ENGINEER ANWAR NASSIF VOCATIONAL
TRAINING CENTRE ON SAME CHURCH SITE IN ONDANGWA, NAMIBIA.
DESIGNED FOR TRAINING & JOB CREATION FOR UNEMPLOYED-
FOOD PROCESSING, COMPUTER LITERACY, BRICKLAYING SKILLS.**



A RESTAURANT, BAR & DANCE CLUB, TRANSFORMED INTO SAINT MARK CATHEDRAL. COMPLETED IN 1990 & CONSECRATED BY H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III IN 1994.



THE BISHOPRIC HEADQUARTERS IN NAIROBI, KENYA. GIVEN BY THE LORD TO THE COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH THROUGH AN AUCTION IN 1983 AT WHICH THERE WERE NO OTHER BIDDERS. FORMERLY A HOTEL & BAR.



ZULU COPTIC ORTHODOX FAITHFULS IN NONGOMA, KWAZULU NATAL SERVED BY FATHER MORCOS KHOBE. REV. FR JOHANNES & REV. FR MORCOS APPEAR.



THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE OF THE VIRGIN MARY OF ZEITOUN IN NONGOMA, KWAZULU NATAL, COMPLETED IN 2000. H.H. POPE SHENOUDA III'S FOUNDATION STONE LAYING, 1997. TAILORING & CARPENTRY CLASSES FOR RURAL PEOPLE, PLUS ACTIVE PRE-SCHOOL.



**ABIDJAN, C'OTE D'IVOIRE 16/02/2002- LAYING OF FOUNDATION
STONE OF FIRST-EVER C.O.C. IN WEST AFRICA. LAND DONATED BY
GOVERNMENT. CARDINAL AGRE OF THE ROMAN C.C. & VATICAN
AMABASSADOR, GENERAL OREY- MINISTER OF HOUSING, &
EGYPTIAN, ETHIOPIAN & RUSSIAN AMBASSADORS, REV. FR JOHN
RAMZY & COPTIC ORTHODOX CONGREGATION APPEAR**



**2003: FENCE, SURROUNDING THE WHOLE LAND OF 10,000 M2,
BOREHOLE WATER TOWER, CONSTRUCTION OF MAIN CHURCH
BUILDING, RESIDENCE, GUESTS & VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE.**

possible scholarships to Egypt

13. The Saint Stephen and Saint Demiana Church, Carletonville, Free State; the church acquired land of five thousand square metres; Father Musa Jim ordained, 2002, to serve there following one-year's study in Egypt; he erected a small church and a residence out of timber and iron sheets until plans approval. Construction of church and priest's residence started 2003.
14. Durban, KwaZulu Natal; Church obtained land of nineteen thousand square metres; struggling for last five years to receive title deed to start church building; Deacon Ndumiso Hlabe on scholarship; Father Pavlos Khobe serves periodically
15. Saint Moses the Black and Saint Mary of Egypt Church, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape; acquired the land of four thousand square metres, Zwide; Father Angelos Ntamo ordained, 2002, to serve after two years scholarship in Egypt; struggling four years for construction obstacles removal
16. The Coptic Orthodox Church, Port Alfred; acquired land of twenty two hundred square metres; future plan- church construction
17. Vredefort, Free State; church acquired land of five thousand square metres for future development
18. The Coptic Orthodox Church has congregations without land or church buildings in GaRankuwa, Kroonstaad, and Sasolburg

Zambia

1. Church registered, Lusaka, 1984; services started in rented house, 1987; cathedral, residence and Coptic Orthodox Centre, Established, 1988; consecrated by H.H., January 1994

Zimbabwe

1. Church established by obtaining a property of six thousand

two hundred square metres, Harare, 1988; given the name of Saint Anthony Monastery; Saint Mark Church completed, 1993; consecrated by H.H., January, 1994

2. St Mark Church, Dema Seke in Mashonaland East; foundation stone of church and training centre laid by H.H., January 1994; church consecrated by H.H. and training centre inaugurated, April 1997

Namibia

Property acquired, Windhoek, the capital, 1990; intermittent services rendered until church obtained land of four thousand square metres in northern town of Ondangwa; Saint Mark Coptic Orthodox Church built, 1998; construction of six hundred square metres vocational training centre, started, 2001; building completed and named in commemoration of the late Dr Morad Nassif and Engineer Anwar Nassif, 2003

Botswana

Church renders intermittent services to Coptic Orthodox families

Lesotho

Church renders intermittent services to Coptic Orthodox families

Swaziland

Church renders intermittent services to Coptic Orthodox families

THE WEST AFRICAN REGION

Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)

Eglise Copte Orthodoxe (Coptic Orthodox Church) officially registered 1997, after which, ten thousand square metres of land gifted by the Government; foundation stone of church, residence, and guest house laid, 16 February, 2002; fence built surrounding land; under ground borehole dug; electric supply brought in; construction of the main building, end of 2002; building nearly completed; served by Father John Ramzy, trilingual and Canadian citizen

Togo

Mission services started in rented house by Father John Ramzy; church registered, 2002; land search in progress

Ghana

Cooperative efforts with Mrs Fathia Nkrumah, widow of late president and liberator of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, crowned with registration of Coptic Orthodox Church as an official entity, March 2003; served periodically by Father John Ramzy; looking for land to establish church and vocational training centre

HISTORICAL CHANGES

- ◇ January 1976, at the start of our mission, the Church did not have even one footstep in any African country below the equator. In 2003, through the grace of God and His guidance, the Coptic Orthodox Church exists in ten African countries, and owns more than one hundred acres of land.
- ◇ The Bishopric of Mission, served by Bishop Paul, established Coptic churches in D.R. Congo and Tanzania. It has also added new churches in Kenya and Zambia.

2. Some Ecumenical Collaborations of the Coptic Orthodox Church

South African Council of Churches

Gauteng Council of Churches

National Religious Leaders Forum of South Africa

Jan Smuts Axis Group of Churches

Religious Broadcasting Corporation

Religious Education Forum of South Africa

All Africa Conference of Churches

Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church of Johannesburg

Russian Orthodox Church in South Africa

Greek Orthodox Church in South Africa

Saint Thomas Congregation - Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church of India in South Africa

Serbian Orthodox Church in South Africa

Lebanese Maronite Church in South Africa

Institute of Historical Theology

3. Some Governmental and Other Official Entities with which the Coptic Orthodox Church has collaborated

South African President, Thabo Mbeki, and South African Government Meetings with National Religious Leaders

The Governor of the Reserve Bank of South Africa (Poverty Eradication)

Various Non-governmental Organizations (Developmental Projects)

NEPAD (New Partnership for African Development)

South African Broadcasting Corporation- several interviews and documentaries about C.O.C.

Rand Afrikaans University (Classics Department)

Ancient Egyptian Society

Parktown & Westcliff Heritage Trust

Christian Iconographers of Pretoria

4. A Spiritual Page in History by Father Bisenty A-M. Gerges

Sweet memories and spiritual experiences that will never be forgotten...

It was the hand of our righteous Lord that led me to serve in Africa. H.G. Bishop Antonius Markos invited me to serve for two years from

1993 to 1994 in Kenya and Zimbabwe.

Serving in Africa has been like serving in the good paradise that brings forth crop. I was truly in great need of this opportunity, and I felt the hand of our compassionate God carrying me to serve there. He has pleased my heart with the gathering of the fruits for eternal life, "that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together" (John 4:36).

The Master sends His workers to His field with an unchanging firm commandment, and no changeable circumstances can ever alter or change the word of God:

† " *God into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*" (Mark 16:15)

† " *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" (Matthew 28:19)

We cannot deny the social impact of the various missionaries from the United States, Canada, England, and many others.

Yet, it is clear the Bible that was offered to Africans greatly lacked "the spirit of discipleship" that the Lord Jesus commanded us to practise. It was intended as the connection between Him and us, and the strong bond that holds together all the various components and elements of the Church from one generation to the next.

A Zimbabwean, Ms Jean Amboia, used to serve the Church in Harare and with much bitterness told me: "They took away from us everything. Not only our wealth and our freedom but they also enslaved us to give us the Bible."

However, when the feet of Saint Mark the apostle reaches the cropland, the story has to greatly vary, as he carried experiences of true discipleship, witnessed in the upper room (the house of his

mother, Mary) around the table of the Lord. There they ate and were satisfied, "and when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:30). These are the most unique attributes and characteristics of our Coptic Church and are the basis of her service and worship:

† The Table of the Lord- the Eucharist

† The Praise

† The Mount of Olives

There is no doubt that the teachings of our Coptic Church have presented to the people of Africa their Christ manifested in the holy sacraments, after He had been hidden from them; a prisoner of unfruitful teachings but also the darkness of some anti-Biblical traditions.

I served in Africa for approximately two years, through which I went around many Coptic (African) churches that served the people in rural Kenya and the impoverished townships of South Africa. In spite of the simplicity of the lifestyles and buildings, His body and blood on the altar remained the most precious treasure our humanity has ever owned. For our liturgy with its sweet hymns and unique rituals bears a sweet aroma that runs from Alexandria- "the altar of the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt" (Isaiah 19:19)- to Cape Town to the deepest part of the African continent and its chaste, undefiled heart.

Did not the Holy and Righteous One ask us saying: "Eat from it, *all of you*... Drink from it, *all of you*"? How could we then hinder a great number of people from participating in this great sacrament; those people who have suffered injustice due to the difficult life they had to endure and the cruelty of other human beings through famine, disease, war, poverty and colonialism.

The table of the Lord has always been closely related to praise. The mission of preaching in Africa, out of Egypt, has successfully

transferred, to the pure African hearts, this precious treasure. This has reinforced the strong connection between all who drink from the Nile.

We thank our Lord for His granting our African brothers the gift of love of music. This He has put inside the human soul to prepare it for heavenly life, where there is constant praise. He has granted those on earth the gift of the Seraphim's praise (Isaiah 6:2-4).

In 1993, I spent the Holy Passion Week at our Coptic Orthodox Church in Harare, Zimbabwe, and in 1994, in our church in Nairobi, Kenya, where people from all regions of Kenya were gathered. H.G. Bishop Antonius Markos led the service, with his sweet voice and his love for praise. Around him were many of the African priests. One can only imagine the extent of Saint Mark's joy, being the African apostle, as he sees and hears the children of his continent among the priests, deacons and youth cry out loud, with all their might, night and day with the sweet praise of the holy week of Pascha: "To You is the power, and the glory, and the blessings...". Moreover, can we possibly know and appreciate how much David the prophet was amazed as his ears picked up his own psalms being sung in a sweet African dialect, which rises up from the middle of the continent to the heavenly, divine throne of God?

My heart used to leap with joy and many tears started to flow from my eyes for the riches and treasures of our Church were never meant to be displayed at museums and halls of fame, but they are the living water and the heavenly food, which nourishes the soul, the body and the spirit.

In many churches throughout the African continent, many Africans already live and practise the praise mixed with the doctrine of the fathers that have the precious orthodox thinking. This has played a great role in their acceptance of our Orthodox Church, without any unfruitful intellectual or philosophical thinking. Furthermore,



WITH PRESIDENT THABO MBEKI IN THE STATE HOUSE, PRETORIA, IN OCTOBER 2002- NATIONAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS STUDYING SOLUTIONS FOR PEOPLE'S HEALTH, POVERTY, CRIME & CORRUPTION PROBLEMS.



1993, WITH CONTEMPORARY FOREIGN MINISTER OF SA, PIK BOTHA, IN HIS OFFICE, PRETORIA. REV. FR BISHOY YOWAKIM (BISHOP PAUL) & REV. FR JOHANNES AWADALLA APPEAR.



SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT THABO MBEKI IN ASSEMBLY WITH NATIONAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS-
EXTENDED MEETING 29-30/04/03 TO DISCUSS DEVELOPMENT FOR SOUTH AFRICA & ALL AFRICANS

whoever practises our Praise and Doxology with a spiritual understanding will be able to appreciate the value of my view about serving in sweet Africa.

Some might say: "What could possibly be the size of a service over a quarter of a century in comparison with the work of the other churches?" It is a question, which our Saviour Himself has answered with very simple but deep words reproaching the criticizers saying: "Why do you trouble the woman?" (Matthew 26:10). And the woman in this case is the service and the preaching in Africa that always pours the alabaster flask of the very costly fragrant oil on the feet of the Lord Jesus our Saviour. Thus the Coptic Church in Africa knows how to support her service with the spirit of submission and humility, in the place of prayer at the Mount of Olives, which is the third strong attribute after the table of the Lord and the Praise.

Our heavenly Groom does not perceive the meaning of the majority as the politicians of today do; in fact, the only time the majority gathered around the Lord Jesus was when they cried out saying: "Crucify him...Crucify Him!" Even when He healed the ten lepers, only one came back and with a loud voice glorified God (Luke 17:15), and how sorry was the Lord Jesus for the other nine who never came back, for He sorrowfully asked: "Where are the nine?" (Luke 17: 17). However, there is no doubt that He rejoices with the thankful and worshipping minority, for He invited many yet He knows that the elect are few (Matthew 20:16). As for His sheep that recognize His voice and follow Him with a truthful and an honest heart, He calls them His little flock and it is the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom (Luke 12:32).

H.H. Pope Shenouda III- may the Lord give him long life- has a very precious and famous saying: "Opinions are weighed not enumerated." Furthermore, the testimony of the foreigner has

always had a great significance, which ceaselessly pleases the heart of the vineyard's owner (Luke 17:18).

My next story is a witness to the significance of the testimony of the foreigner:

During my service in Zimbabwe, H.G. Bishop Antonius Markos had asked me to look for a piece of land which would be suitable for the building of a church and a Coptic centre in the middle of the residences of the African citizens. Through his prayers, we were able to locate and obtain a piece of land in Dema, Seke, which is in Mashonaland East, about 40km from the Harare. There was a tremendous joy on the day when the project cornerstone was placed by the hand of H.H. Pope Shenouda III. It was a remarkable day in history and the hearts of the heavenly hosts, the Zimbabweans, Ethiopians, Eritreans and resident Egyptians greatly rejoiced with ours.

A few days after the celebration, I went to thank the Governor of Mashonaland East, who had attended the celebrations with many other politicians. He met me with particular joy saying: "I am the one who should thank you for giving me this rare opportunity. Pope Shenouda III is a great man. We used to believe that there was only one pope- the Pope in Rome, however today we are proud to be introduced to the Pope of Africa. What H.G. the Bishop told us about the project is very admirable and it calls for optimism. I have decided with the city committee to increase the area of the piece of land allotted for the Coptic Orthodox Church from 5,000 square metres to 10,000 square metres."

Our glorious Master has truly granted the blessing to the mustard seed and He praised the two mites of the poor widow. He also praised the woman who poured the fragrant oil and He promised that wherever the gospel is preached in the world, it would be told what that woman had done, as a memorial to her. We cannot testify

except with what we saw and what our hands have touched, asking for the prayers of our father H.G. Bishop Antonius Markos, who granted me the opportunity and the blessing to come close to the fruitful cropland of Africa. May our Lord give delight to his kind and pure heart, through the prayers of the shepherd of shepherds and the father of all, our Pope, H.H. Pope Shenouda III.

5. Message from Dr Nabil Nakhla Mankarious, the Coptic Former Pharmacist in Kenya, Zambia and Zimbabwe

In January 1988 I was assigned by a large pharmaceutical company from America to settle in Nairobi, Kenya to represent them in East Africa. The first place I visited with my wife, Mediha, and my daughters Nevine and Shereen, was the Coptic Bishopric of African Affairs. I was very touched by its prominence and location on Ngong Road, one of the main roads in Nairobi, which is also very central in the great metropolis.

The compound is on a large area of land surrounded by high walls. It's amazing that this place, which was once a hotel, bar, restaurant, and dancing hall has become the headquarters of the Coptic Orthodox Church in East Africa. It contains the Saint Mark Cathedral Reception Hall, the Bishop's residence, a vocational training centre. I also visited the nearby Saint Anthony Monastery, the Saint Mina Monastery in Maseno, which is near the equator, and many other Coptic churches in Kisumu as well as other towns and villages. I had the opportunity to meet many Kenyan priests who were trained and educated by Bishop Markos and were sent for scholarships in the dioceses and monasteries of Egypt. Attending the liturgy prayers in a variety of languages was truly a blessing. These languages include English, Coptic, Arabic,

KiSwahili, and other vernacular languages.

The Activities of H.G. Bishop A. Markos in Other Countries

H.G. Bishop A. Markos expanded the mission of the Coptic Orthodox Church from its launch in Kenya to several African countries including Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa. He chose for these churches, indigenous priests from those countries as well as Egyptian priests. I took the blessings of visiting Saint Mark Cathedral in Lusaka, Zambia and Saint Mark Church in the Saint Anthony Monastery in Harare. The Lord granted my wife and me the privilege of witnessing an historical event in Johannesburg in January of 1993. We observed the establishment of Saint Mark Coptic Centre and the baptism of the first group of leaders of the African Orthodox Church.

We have known Bishop A. Markos as a true father, a great evangelist, and a caring shepherd. He has helped us throughout many hardships in our lives. Through the intercessions of the Holy Mother Saint Mary, the prayers of H.H., and his brother in the apostolic ministry Bishop Antonius Markos, the Lord Christ has been glorified in our lives.

The Visit of H.H. Pope Shenouda III to Nairobi in 1994

Through the spirit of God, which dwells in him, H.H. shows true fatherly love and richness in virtue, which makes him attractive to people of various cultures and religions. Everyone who speaks with him does so in simplicity without any barrier. In 1994, in spite of all his responsibilities, H.H. paid a very blessed and unforgettable visit to Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The days were full of joy, blessings, and a true feeling that God had sent him to us as His own messenger to lead and inspire us by his words and deeds.

H.G. Bishop Antonius Markos organized an evening gathering in our humble home with the Coptic congregation. We were blessed

by the presence of H.H., H.G. Bishop A. Markos, H.G. Bishop Serapion, and Fr. Mina Ibrahim from Australia. I requested H.H. to bless my home and he asked for a glass of water. He prayed the Thanksgiving Prayer and sprinkled blessed water all over the house; I put the leftover in a small bottle. The next morning I looked at the little water, blaming myself for having not brought a larger jar of water for such a great blessing. I carried the bottle to my work office to sprinkle the rest of the water there. After about fifteen minutes I noticed that the bottle of water on my desk was completely full, and even overflowing. Nobody was present at that time, and I realized that a miracle had happened through the prayers of H.H.. When I communicated with H.H., he simply said: "Maybe you were not paying attention." In spite of the ten years that have passed, I still keep that bottle full of the blessed water. All glory be to our Lord now and forever.
Amen.

6. The Languages to which the Agpeya, Prayer of Raising the Incense, Saint Basil's Liturgy, and Prayers of Sacramental Services were Translated

Kenya: KiSwahili, KiKamba, KiKuyu, KiLuhya, KiLuo, and English

South Africa: Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana, and Tsonga

Namibia: Oshivambo

Zimbabwe: Shona

Zambia: Bemba

Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast): French

7. Certificate of Registration of the Coptic Orthodox Church in Ghana, West Africa

No. G-11,120



REPUBLIC OF GHANA

Certificate of Incorporation


I hereby certify that the

COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF GHANA

is this day incorporated under the Companies Code, 1963 (Act 179) and that the liability of its members is limited by guarantee.

Given under my hand and official seal at Victoriaborg, Accra,

this 18th day of MARCH, 20 01

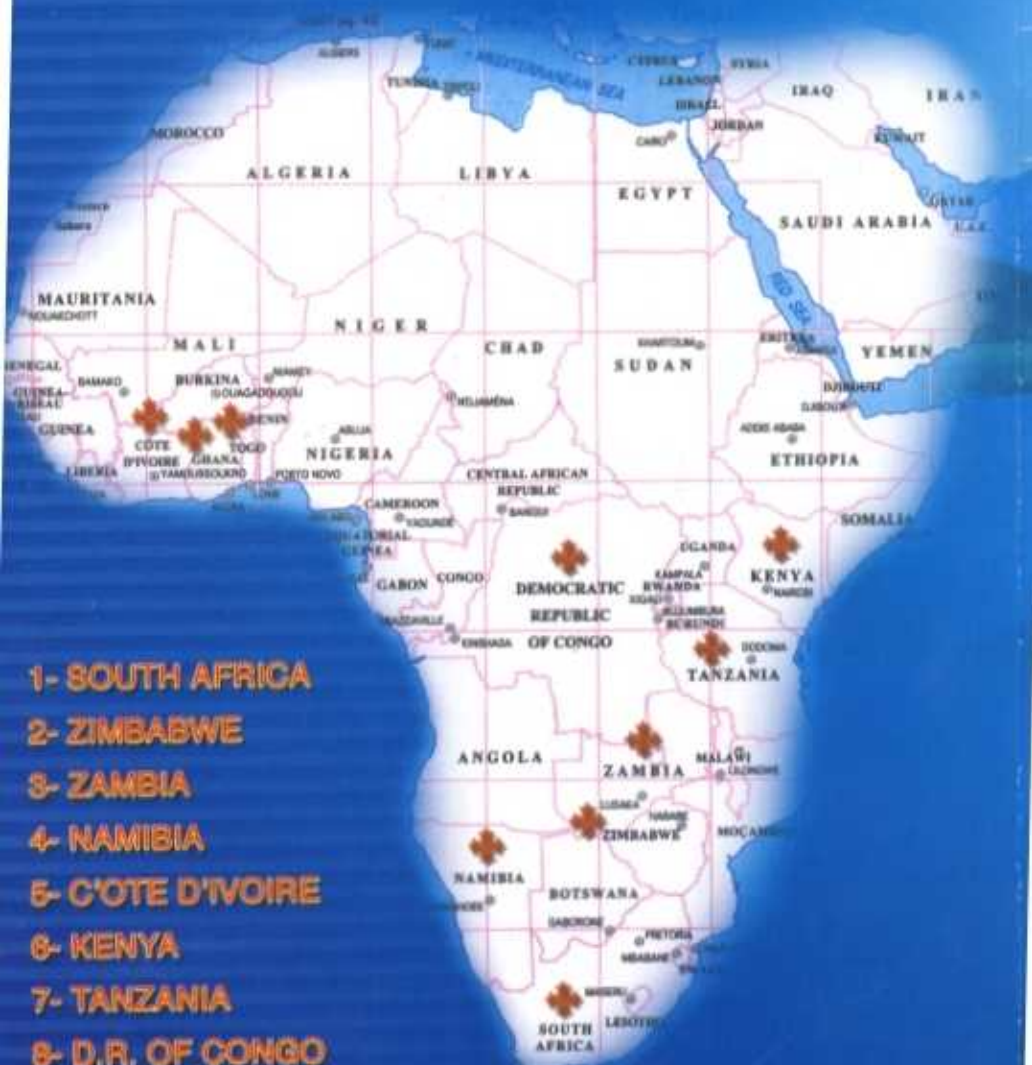


For: Registrar of Companies, Ghana

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- 1- SOUTH AFRICA
- 2- ZIMBABWE
- 3- ZAMBIA
- 4- NAMIBIA
- 5- C'OTE D'IVOIRE
- 6- KENYA
- 7- TANZANIA
- 8- D.R. OF CONGO
- 9- TOGO
- 10- GHANA