



THE DEPARTURE OF CONTEMPORARY PIOUS FATHERS

THE CONTEMPORARY
FATHERS OF MARCH

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The Contemporary Saints of March

✦ How do we celebrate our departed fathers?

In March 2021, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the departure of our blessed father, Pope Kyrillos VI, and we also commemorate some of our fathers who departed in this month.

Our contemporaries, Pope Shenouda III, Hegumen Mikhail Ibrahim, Hegumen Bishoy Kamel, Monk Faltaous of the Syrian Monastery and others.

What concerns me is not the display of miracles that occurred at their hands, **but the secret of their fellowship with God working in them and through them.**

Also, what was occupying them during their struggle in the world, and the extent of their love and work for the benefit of mankind while they were in Paradise, so that we could imitate them to build up our souls and care for the salvation of those we meet.

These fathers were not concerned with performing miracles, but rather the salvation of the whole world, so that their hearts were a living icon of the Savior of the world, the lover of mankind.

✦ How did the early church celebrate its departed servants?

If we go back to the writings of the early church fathers on the departure of the fathers or the commemoration of their departure, we notice the following:

- Often the writer does not aim to narrate events or history of the priest who departed from the world. He does not mention the name of the priest, and he does not disclose it if he has a priestly or episcopal rank. What preoccupies the writer is not to talk about a specific person (regardless of his personal relationship with him). Rather, he reveals the role of the priest (or any member of the church) in the life of the struggling Church on her way to cross to Paradise, to meet her Bridegroom face to face, and to ask for the salvation of the whole world, especially for the coming ages, until the day of Christ's descent on the clouds and the resurrection of those who have fallen asleep.
- The death of the priest does not destroy his love for his people, the flock of Christ, for he does not cease to pray and ask for their sake, but for the sake of mankind, while he is in the presence of the Lord himself.
- The death of the righteous priest adds an asset to the church, as it becomes rich in Paradise, drawing the hearts of those who strive to heaven as an eternal dwelling place for them.
- The author reveals the **genuine unity between those struggling on earth and those who have fallen asleep in Christ Jesus.**
- To reveal the **truth about our heavenly nationality in the heavenly Christ**, as we are strangers and guests who go on an enjoyable and wonderful journey in the midst of trouble. We are crossing to the glorious Heavenly Harbor.
- Striving towards the **living faith**, the author is always concerned with **highlighting the spiritual behavior**, which is befitting to the children of God, as members of the body of Christ, so that they do not cease to struggle, relying on the supreme grace of God.

- Highlighting the role of the holy fathers in the Lord is not about performing miracles, but rather a practical disclosure of the divine possibilities for the enjoyment of fellowship with God. Saint Jacob of Serugh says in one of his homilies:

“I would start to talk about priesthood if I could, so enlighten my mind to sculpt your statue of glory.

Love asked me to show his news to those who hear me, about this mystery and about the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The mystery is great and glorious, and you, Lord of all, know its secrets and glories. Astonishment seized me on the service of the apostles, and the words of our Lord who directed them to the twelve.

“It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.” (John 16:7), and “He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” (John 14:26). “He breathed on them.” (John 20:22), and filled them with the Holy Spirit, and all of them became divine and filled with mysteries.

Who can be a priest in the sacraments of the Son, serving the glorious things like God?

Who is pure and without falsehood before God, so that he may put on Fire, rise, and serve the Flame?

What is that dust that has been consumed by Your divinity so that it can hold that flame which is incomprehensible?

Who is purified from the filth of the world, and rises to such degree of great glory to be a priest?

If anyone were a fiery seraph, he would not be able to offer the perfect sacrifices of the apostolic choir.”

- What preoccupies **Saint Macarius** as he depicts faithful believers as they crossed from this world, saying, “Christians who were deemed worthy in this life to obtain the heavenly garment, carry this garment dwelling in their souls, and when this present creation perishes according to God’s predestination and previous knowledge, and Heaven and Earth pass away, that heavenly garment, that now covers and glorifies their souls, will clothe their naked bodies and glorify them. These bodies that will be raised from the graves and will be presented on that day covered with the invisible heavenly gift. This heavenly garment, Christians receive in this life, starting now (Sermon 2:32).
- In this month (March), we celebrate the memory of some fathers who touched us with their longing to set out towards Paradise and their interest in the journey of their hearts to the bosom of God. As Saint Synclitica says, what concerns her since her youth is the escape from the outward formalities, and **the interest in the inner journey that is very long and yet very short at the same time.** It is a long journey because it extends from our life on earth to our encounter with the Dweller of Heaven, yet, very short because it begins with the heart that is inside us until it reaches our heavenly God who dwells in our hearts.

- Also, **Saint Augustine** says that because of his stupidity, he was searching for God through the creativity and beauty of creation, and through dialogue with philosophers relying on human wisdom, while God who dwells within him deeper than his depth, and higher than his height.
- As we remember the talents and gifts of each father, we remember how he used to ignite them by the work of the Holy Spirit of God in them.

We discover that every believer has his own personality and unique talents, so we do not try to imitate anyone in an external demonstration. Rather, we ask that we carry the icon of Christ and walk in Him according to what He gave us of His talents. I will mention the talents of five of the church fathers who departed in March as examples.

✦ *Pope Kyrillos the VI and His Holy Talents* ✦

Pope Kyrillos was known for his interest in the life of prayer. On one occasion, his holiness asked one of the fathers in Alexandria, "Why does the priest put a **«shamla»** down from his head to covers his eyes?«» The priest responded, not knowing the reason. Then the pope told him that, "While you are praying, raising the incense, tears flow from your eyes that the people cannot see."

This is how his holiness invites us to pray in the hidden spirit of repentance.



✦ Our blessed father used to ask the priest before starting the liturgy prayer, "Have you prayed the absolution of the priests?" If the answer is no, he would ask him to pray it before starting the liturgy. The priests' absolution prayer contains supplications for the needs of the whole world; especially the fallen, the sick, the imprisoned, the oppressed, etc. Thus, the priest feels in his depths that, as a father, he prays for everyone with a heart burning with love.

✦ His holiness reveals his **spiritual interest in his children without being distracted by external appearances.**

At the beginning of my priesthood service, our beloved father, Father Bishoy Kamel, asked me to go to our father, Pope Kyrillos, to receive his blessing when he came to Alexandria, and he did not wait for us to meet so we could go together to his holiness, because he used to come to Alexandria once every month, and we had not gone to obtain his blessing for six months. He also asked me to apologize for not meeting with him for that long of a period. Indeed, I did this, and he answered me with love, as he said, "I am not concerned about your presence when I visit Alexandria, but what makes me happy is what I hear about you." When I rushed to tell my beloved Father Bishoy, he was amazed and immediately went to the Patriarchate to receive his blessing.

✦ One of the priests went to Cairo to congratulate Pope Kyrillos after his ordination, he met him cheerfully and thanked him, then said to him, "Do you know that tomorrow I

will go, God willing, to Alexandria?" The priest replied that he knew. His holiness said, "Next time, do not come alone, but with your brothers the priests."

✝ When Father Bishoy went with him from his residence in the Patriarchate to the church of St. Mark to pray with him the Divine Liturgy, a lady asked him to pray for her. When he started choosing the lamb, he asked our Father Bishoy, "What is the name of the lady who asked us to pray for her?" He answered that he forgot the name, so he said to him, "When someone asks to pray for him, do not forget his name!"

✝ In the monastery of St. Mina, before the wall and the churches attached to the monastery were built, he called me and asked, "Did you visit with Father Bishoy that person who speaks poorly of me this week?" I replied yes in affirmation. He was silent a little, and I said to him, "Your holiness, he opened the Bible and read it, and did not utter a single word against you. If he comes to Alexandria, should we visit him or not?" He said, "As long as he opens the Bible and does not offend me with a word, visit him."

✝ When he heard the people of Alexandria claim that it was President Abdel Nasser who had requested that Father Bishoy Kamel travel abroad, his holiness said to him, "This never happened. If you do not want to travel, do not travel!" Our Father Bishoy told him, "I wish to travel because many youths ask me my opinion on immigration, and I do not know what to answer them. Therefore, my travel gives me an opportunity to serve those wishing to emigrate! "

✝ On the feast of his ordination, priests would gather inside St. Mark's Church. Our Father Yusef Magali, the oldest of the priests at that time, used to say a brief word of welcome to the Pope, and the Pope would pray for us and distribute the holy bread (the korban), and we would leave joyous even with this simple meeting.

✝ One of the greatest things about him was, one time, he heard about a person who spoke poorly of him then came to meet him. His holiness greeted him with a smile from the heart, then the Pope called his disciple over and said to that person, "Anytime you want to come to meet me, you may come without asking for an appointment." He said to his disciple, "If I am asleep, wake me without telling him that I was sleeping."

✝ I came into contact with some loved ones, including people of Lebanese, Syrian, and Iraqi background. They were astonished by the personality of Pope Kyrillos VI, who loved prayer and praise in his wondrous humility.

✝ One of the priests, in the period of forty days in the monastery after his ordination, received news that he would not return to the church for which he was ordained, but rather serve in the Patriarchate. He met the Pope and told him that he had stumbled at the start of his service because of his transfer to the Patriarchate, so the Pope allowed him to serve in the church for which he was ordained, but the Pope was not pleased.

After a while, the father went to apologize to the Pope that he had bothered him.

The Pope told him the story of the mosquito that stung a tree, and then it came to apologize to the tree. The tree said to it, "What does your bite do to one of my leaves, when you are a mosquito, and I am a tree?" So the priest fell silent in shame, & the Pope embraced him with special love, as if nothing had happened between them.

✠The most beautiful gift or honor we present on his commemoration this year is: If a person offends me, I count the offense as a worthless mosquito bite. Also, to open my heart with love for those who offend me or criticize me, counting this love as a tree that a mosquito will not be able to harm.

✠ *Pope Shenouda III* ✠

- **Humble great soul!** What concerns me now is your great soul expanded with love, which seeks the salvation of many. Indeed, your popularity is amazing at the international level. So many loved you, even world leaders and senior officials, with the admiration of the ecumenical ecclesiastical leaders, and your wondrous role in preserving the unity of the Egyptian nation, despite the harsh conditions that Egypt went through that could have been shaken by successive sectarian events for long periods!



- **A loyal and wonderful friend!** With the collective appeal of our beloved father; Wherever he is, many were attracted to him, and no one was tired of his words. I will not forget what the President of the University of California said at the end of the speech of His Holiness the Pope, *“This hall has never witness a person talking for about two hours, with no one getting tired of his speech as it happened today!”* It was amazing when his holiness used to meet with a person, especially if he was alone, regardless of his age or occupation. He felt that he was talking to him as in a family atmosphere in simplicity, love and openness! The person would stand in astonishment, wondering if he was speaking with a giant in spirituality, wisdom, knowledge, and reverence, or with a simple, gentle, and meek child!

I will mention, for example:

A young man from Alexandria visited him when he was the Bishop of Education. After they talked together, he asked to be excused, and, minutes later, the young man was surprised by his holiness, Bishop Shenouda, who came back carrying a tray with food on it, and presented it to him, so that the young man would not be hungry! This scene was repeated with him and with others.

He had a friend who was younger than him. They were friends when he was young, long before he joined the monastery. Due to church circumstances, the young man took a semi-hostile attitude towards him. Whenever he saw him in the Patriarchate, and at that time he had been ordained as a Bishop of Education, the young man would give him his back and would not go to greet him. Anba Shenouda heard that the young man had a serious illness, so he went to his house and spent hours with him comforting him, and he used to frequently visit him and serve him until the young man was healed. The young man returned to his friendship and his heart ignited with love towards him!

- Before his departing, His Holiness told Tasoni Mary, *“I owe my father ...”*, and she was astonished at his word; He continued saying, *“He gave me a book to review when I was a monk, and I was not even ordained as a priest, and until now I have not reviewed it!”*

Thus, in his surprising humility, he remembers that I gave him a book to review 50 years or more before. These simple things reveal his amazing love and his wondrous precision!

- Before his departure, I sat with him in private, and when I was feeling my inefficiency, I told him, "I want to confess to you something ... I feel that I am very inadequate in all my service, and that I took a place that someone else could have taken to serve. I don't know what I will say to God." I was shocked when his holiness answered me, "Oh, if you say so, then what should I say?" These are his inner feelings, neither his position nor his popularity in the whole world nor the words of praise lessened from the humbleness of his heart before God, but in a spirit of hope. His famous phrase about the consecration of any church, or on some recounting his pastoral works, "Others work hard, and I take the praise !!"

- After choosing him for the Patriarchate in the early years, I remember in a session with a small group, he said, "What a person condemns by criticizing his brother, he will not realize until he discovers the reality when he is put in his brother's place." By this he meant himself. When he became a patriarch, he understood some of the actions of His Holiness Pope Kyrillos VI, which he did not understand until after he had been put in his place.

A man of God is distinguished by the fear of the Lord: Our father Bishoy Kamel told me that Anba Shenouda, the Bishop of Education, requested that he takes the blessing of our church in the evening. Indeed, we went to the church and we were waiting for him, alone. When he came and entered, he did not even point with his hands to us, but went towards the altar, bowed, and stood praying. He then entered the altar and kissed it, then we went to meet him.

After he left the church, Father Bishoy told me, inevitably this beautiful tradition of beginning a meeting by meeting with God first, represented by praying before the altar before he talks to anyone, he must have received from one of the elders.

The bishop carries the fear of the Lord in his heart. From that moment on, Father Bishoy practiced this behavior whenever he entered any church.

The sufferer who shares the suffering: In his meetings with priests, he often urged them to be kind to those suffering and to the needy, and as we know, he used to attend himself the Righteousness Committee in Cairo and Alexandria.

What astonishes me was what happened in the week before his departure, while he was in the midst of his intense pain. I wonder if he felt what a man, who had devoted his life to preaching among the pagans with a Catholic mission, was going through. I will leave it to a loved one in Los Angeles to tell us what happened to him, which he announced before the Pope's departure.

"In the early morning of March 11, 2012, I woke up after a dream. I went to visit Pope Shenouda III and he was very ill at that time. His face smiled broadly, and he handed me a piece of paper. On the paper was the name of someone which he had written in blue ink. He asked me to help this person financially.

I looked at him with a bit of hesitation, and I wanted to ask him if this person really needed money (since I know the mission is helping him), and before I finish two words of the sentence, he stopped me, saying, 'Give him and do not comment if this person is in need or not. **Leave God to judge, as long as you offer it with your heart, that is the important thing, other than this, it is not our business.**' I was only a few feet away from his bed, and he put his arms around my neck and said, 'That's enough, **I've done my role on my part ... it's time for me to go.**'"

A source of joy for many: When the late President Anwar Sadat wanted to limit the Pope's residence to the monastery of Anba Bishoy and the army surrounded the monastery, Major General Nabil Aita, responsible for all Coptic affairs in General Intelligence, used to visit him.

His holiness said that he used to transform his meeting with him into happy sessions, until the Major General told him, "The amount of laughter which I experience in your presence, I have never experienced all my life."

He knows how to win many people by sending a spirit of joy into their lives. When they allowed visits to his holiness, many initially had difficulty meeting with the Pope in his heavily guarded residence! They were surprised by his inner peace, his confidence in the work of God, and the transformation of all things for good. His meetings were a source of wondrous joy for everyone he met.

His concern for the sick and those suffering: With his holiness' concern for the salvation of souls, he felt that the work of priesthood, regardless of rank, is the meeting of every person with the Savior, to enjoy fellowship with Him. He had a well-known saying, "The priest, in his home visits, enters with God and goes out after he has presented every heart for God to dwell in it."

" His interest in healing the soul was complemented by his longing to also heal the body, as he was known for his special interest in visiting the sick, even while he was Patriarch in hospitals and sometimes at home. He was known for his wondrous tenderness, to the point that he could not see a person taking a needle for treatment. His tears would flow when he would see a crying person, so he used to avoid meeting with a crying person. If he intervened in a problem, and the person who had that problem would cry, even if he was mistaken, his holiness would withdraw until the crying one stopped crying. He was afraid to cry, lest the person take advantage of his holiness' tears.

His interest in children: During his visits, many asked him to baptize their children.

On his visit to St. Mark's Church in London, when the baptism room was very crowded, he asked that only the family of the baptized baby be present so that the baptism could be done. Some went out and a child was among them. On his next visit to England, he was told that a child said that his holiness did not love him, because he had sent him out of the baptismal room. He asked to bring the child. He cared for him, stroked him, and was holding him as he moved from one place to another. After his Holiness traveled, the child fondly said to his friends, "His Holiness the Pope loves me very much." **This was how keen he was on children's feelings, so that they would see in him the image of God, the lover of mankind!**

He is never afraid: It was said that at the beginning of his work as a teacher, he used to live with some of his colleagues in a faraway village or suburb, where there was still no electricity. Knowing that he was not afraid, his colleagues wanted to terrify him. On a Thursday, they told him that they would spend the weekend in the city and pretended that they had taken some of their stuff and left him.

In the middle of the night, they tried to disturb him in the darkness by knocking on the window of the room overlooking the street and disappearing, so he would go out and find no one.

Suddenly, he noticed that the light of the kerosine lamp would increase gradually while he was on the bed, so he reached out for it, making the light weak until he fell asleep. The matter was repeated, so he observed the situation and noticed a hand emerging from under the bed and extending to the bulb to increase the light. Without fear he grabbed the hand, then got up and looked under the bed and found that one of his colleagues had done so to frighten him!

✦ *Hegumen Father Mikhail Ibrahim* ✦

A contemporary priest who presented us a living icon of the joyful, serious, inner heavenly life. He passed like a calm breeze that left its sweet traces on the lives of many. He supported so many priests in the midst of their suffering and led them on the path of the gospel in the spirit of love and humility.

Those who knew him, saw him, or became his disciples, saw an uninterrupted series of stories of God's glorious dealings with him and God's generous grace in his life.



- **His upbringing:** Mikhail was born in April 1899 and was raised in the Church of 'Kafr Abdo'. He joined the School that was established by the church, so his heart was inflamed with the love of God and commitment to service. He later joined the Great Coptic School. He was appointed as an employee in the Ministry of Interior Affairs in police stations in Fuwa, then Sherbin in Kafr El-Sheikh, then Belbeis in Hehya where he spent ten years (1938-1948), then he was relocated to the Giza Governorate for a period of three years. From there, he moved to the priestly service in his hometown of Kafr Abdo, on September 16, 1951.

- **His priestly service:** He began his service in Kafr Abdo by canceling public fundraising events so that everyone would offer their donations to God in secret. He also canceled the fees for church services, so the people loved him very much and gathered around him. After a year of his ordination, he was elevated to a hegumen in May 1952. By his caring fatherhood and his care for every family and every individual, he attracted many to the life of repentance and confession from Kafr Abdo and the surrounding areas.

- **His withdrawal to Cairo:** The devil provoked his partner in service to consider what Father Michael was doing as a kind of unnecessary exaggeration.

He revolted against him, so our father quietly withdrew to his family in Cairo in 1955 A.D. and took refuge in the Church of St. Mina in Old Cairo, where he prayed fervently with tears so that the Lord would visit His people in Kafr Abdo.

Our father Marcos Dawood invited him to serve with him the Sunday liturgy due to the absence of one of the monastic fathers. Father Marcos really liked him, so he asked him to serve with him. Father Mikhail remained serving in this church for the rest of his life and continued to place holy leaven in the lives of many, until the day of his departure in 1975 AD.

Bless me, my son! : Our father Mikhail Ibrahim was visiting one of the families and suddenly he stood up to pray and leave. The people of the household marveled at this sudden reaction, so they asked him:

- Why are you in a hurry, Father?
- My son Ibrahim has gone home!
- Let it be, He is going home.
- I mean he went to heaven.

Indeed, they knew after that, that in these moments his son Dr. Ibrahim breathed his last and departed to heaven.

I remember Dr. Ibrahim, whom Father Mikhail Ibrahim has spoken about, while we were sitting together at the house of the late Father Marcos Basilus. He told us this story. "As I was sitting in the reception room of the house, I was thinking about a specific problem that only my son Ibrahim knows about. I raised my eyes while I was sitting on the chair and said, 'Is it not possible for You, Lord, to send me the solution with my son Ibrahim?' Suddenly I found Ibrahim standing in front of me in a beautiful white garment. He said to me, 'What do you want, Dad?' I looked at him and was very happy: 'Son, You are wearing the white garment! I do not want to dirty it with such worldly matters... What I want is for you to pray for me and bless me.' Our father concluded his speech by saying: 'My son Ibrahim blessed me and left.'" I believe that he omitted some details of this conversation that must have been full of spiritual love and blessings!

Is it her voice?!: Our father, Mikhail Ibrahim, narrated this story that happened with him. A young husband came to him complaining about his wife saying: 'She insults me with harsh and cruel words for no reason. He then started mentioning some of these words. Our father listened silently then asked him, 'Are you sure these words are your wife's words?'

- Yes, I am not lying.
 - Is it her voice?
 - It is her voice!
 - Are you sure?
- She is my wife, I lived with her all these years and she is the one who curses me. Father Mikhail smiled as he said: "This is not your wife! The devil speaks on her tongue in order to break your family down. She is good, but the devil wants to destroy both of you. Return to your wife and be kind to her.'

The husband returned to his home and prayed for his wife and for himself, and he began to treat her with sincere love and the house was turned into a holy church full of peace!

A lesson from a fallen old man: At the beginning of my priesthood service, an old man whom I did not know came to me and asked to confess. In great shame he whispered, "For the first time in my life, I have fallen into the sin of fornication." Simply I thought he was complaining about a lustful look, which we consider adultery... so he told me that he did not mean the look. I asked him if he was talking about a sinful touch, but he confirmed that he had really committed the sin. At that time, I could not imagine that someone of his age could commit such sin. Bitterly, I went to our Father Mikhail Ibrahim, full of despair. I told him what happened without mentioning the name, especially since our father was from Cairo, not from Alexandria. Noticing that I was so confused, he calmed me down saying:

- Do you know why God sent you this fallen old man?
- No idea!
- He wants to teach you several lessons at the start of your priestly service:

✝ **Lesson 1:** Don't trust your body even if you are of old age or a priest!
Be very careful!

✝ **The second lesson:** Do not be cruel to a fallen young man, for sin is very wrong and all who were slain by her were strong men, even the elders... be kind to them in order to support them against sin.

I do not say you take their sins lightly, but do not discourage even the sinful. Always fill them with hope.

The angel left me! : The late Father John, of St. Mark's Church in Shubrā, Egypt, was surprised by Father Mikhail Ibrahim, after the angel of the sacrifice had been dismissed and he sprinkled the water, that he returned to the altar with his quiet steps, then made a Metanoia (full prostration on the ground) before a child.

He repeated the metanoia in front of the kid for the second and third time. Father John marvelled at the scene, especially as he heard the elderly priest asked the child with a humble voice: "Forgive me, my son, I yelled at you, forgive me." Father John said: 'Father! How can you, being an elderly priest, make a metanoia for a child who is in the age of your grandchildren?!

In his usual calmness, Father Mikhail told him: 'Father, you don't know what happened. I will tell you, but please do not let anyone know anything about this until I depart (left the world). While I was remembering the names of those who asked me to pray for them on the offerings, I saw an angel standing next to the altar and then disappearing and as I mentioned the following name, he would appear and then disappear. This was repeated until I saw this little deacon move and my mind was distracted so when I yelled at him to calm down, the angel left me and did not return. '

Blessed are you! Wear it! : As the church was crowded with worshipers on the night of the feast, our father, Father Mikhail Ibrahim, noticed a young man coming out of the deacon's room, with tears streaming from his eyes.

He went to him calmly, with a smile, patted his shoulders, and asked him why he was sad. The young man did not want to speak, but our father was determined to know the reason, so the young man said to him: 'I came late, my father, and I would like to serve as a deacon on the night of the feast, but I did not find my tonia. Perhaps another deacon took it to use it in the liturgy.

' Our father took the young man's hand and took him into the priests' room where he offered him with his tunic (Tonya). The young man completely refused, but our father insisted for the young man to wear it telling him: "Blessed are you! Wear it and serve! Do not be upset... Rejoice, because it is not right for you to be sad on this day! "

✠ *Hegumen Father Bishoy Kamel* ✠

• **Three hours needed:** In 1987, after finishing the vespers prayers and the bible study in West Covina, California, someone met me with great excitement saying: 'Do you not know me?! ... I am so-and-so from St George Church in Sporting, Alexandria.' As I welcomed him, he told me: "Let me tell you about my first encounter with Father Bishoy Kamel. I met him at church and was very moved. I told him, 'I need to confess.' He welcomed me, saying,

'For sure, let's do it now.' I said: 'I need three hours from you to give you an idea about my life and prepare myself for confession. After that, I can think about taking communion. When you feel that you have three hours let me know.' He said, 'Okay! So let it be now.' I sat next to him and started talking to him about my weaknesses and sins and his smiles and kind looks, I felt my burdens are being lifted.

• His brief comments filled my heart with hope in Christ my Savior. After about five minutes, I did not find anything to say but felt a great desire to have communion, so I said to him: 'Can I have communion?' He replied: "Of course you can!" I left him in great joy, because I thought that confession was a heavy burden and that it would take many hours ... Now I know Christ's love for me and the richness of His sweet grace.

Father Bishoy opened the gates of hope before me in Christ ... and this is how my life changed."

• **Friends from a Different World:** A girl in North America used to call Father Bishoy Kamel during his treatment in London asking about his health. After his departure, she was stabbed on a New Jersey street by a young man, after which she was taken to the hospital in a serious and hopeless condition. As she was unconscious, she was muttering: 'Father Bishoy! Father Bishoy! Don't leave me!' And because she was serving with the late Father Bishoy Dimitri of East Brunswick, some called him saying, 'She is asking for you ... Come pray for her.' Indeed, he came asking about her, prayed for her, and anointed her with holy oil.

As she regained her consciousness, she said: "I thank my God who did not forsake me. He sent me the Virgin Mary, Pope Kyrillos, and Father Bishoy Kamel who prayed for me.



And when the Blessed Virgin left me and also Pope Kyrillos, I asked Father Bishoy not to leave me. He indeed stayed with me all the time until the end! One of the American surgeons said: 'I treated the non-deadly wounds as but for the deadly ones, I could not do anything. I felt that an invisible hand was at work during the procedure! '

- **He slapped me on the face !:** After the departure of our beloved Father, a girl came to confess saying: *[I fell in love with a non-Christian guy ... I lived with him and almost lost my faith because of him.]* Our beloved father was with all love and kindness supporting me until I left this relationship and rejected it with all my heart. After his departure, I began to yearn for sin and I decided to return to my relationship with the young man.

On one evening, our father appeared to me and was angry. For the first time, I found him slapping me on the face saying: Did I not tell you to leave this young man and stop living in sin?! I got up from my sleep, in terror and decided that by the grace of God, I will never return to sin again!

- **He had nothing!:** When I traveled to Los Angeles, Father Bishoy told me what happened to him there, when he found a church to buy. The church's price was a \$100 million, in addition to the broker's fees and commissions. When he announced that to the congregation, a congregation member stood up and said: "We have been here for ten years and we only collected 500 dollars, so Father Bishoy wants to put you all in trouble, by paying this price that we cannot afford. This will expose us to difficult financial problems. If Father Bishoy has succeeded in Egypt, it does not mean that he will succeed in America." But our Father answered him: "You have two weeks of time, whoever finds a better church, let him come forward ... I have the down-payment in my pocket." By 'pocket', he meant his faith because he truly had nothing! Indeed, many of the youth took personal loans and gave them to Father Bishoy for a down-payment of about \$23,000.

- Father Bishoy told me a wonderful story about God's care for him in those days. He collected the money with all his efforts, him and the congregation of the church, especially the youth. There was still an amount of \$3000 that he had to collect in the last two days. He barely collected the money, and placed the cheques and the cash in his wallet and went to the bank. When he came back, his wallet was lost. He returned to the bank and asked there and began to search where the car was waiting, but found no trace. At night, there was no way out because he cannot ask anyone for a single cent after the people had paid all they could and there was no time left!

- In the middle of the night while our father and the youth were wondering what to do, someone asks about our Father Bishoy. When he met him, he asked him if he had lost a wallet and when he confirmed, he presented him with the wallet. Joy filled everyone's heart, then Tasoni Angel said to our Father: 'Ask him if he accepts any reward.' She was speaking in Arabic, thinking that he did not know her language, but the man answered that he was a Muslim from Pakistan and that he would like to contribute with them to buy the church!

- **My beloved father's comments were:** The Lord taught me a lesson that He is the one who arranges the purchase of His house!

• **His belief in pastoral care made him often say to me:** "I wish we had not built this tall building (that is, Saint George's Church in Sporting) and we instead used the money to buy small pieces of land in poor areas to be small churches that would take care of our children!" He believed in the existence of many simple service centers to serve the word better than tall buildings!

• **Our Beloved Father's Final Words:** If our father was given the opportunity to write a farewell letter to the people and the priests, what would he write about? What would be its main messages?

Come! Let's sit at the feet of the crucified Christ. "Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down in his shade with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." (Song 2: 3). "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2: 2).

"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?" (Galatians 3:1)

"looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12: 2). "And by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross." (Colossians 1:20)

"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14). "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). "Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Luke 9: 23). "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 1:18)

Let's raise our eyes to heaven: "And raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus," (Ephesians 2: 6). "But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, 'Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above)" (Rom 10: 6)

Let our hearts walk according to the gospel of Christ, worshiping in spirit, and witnessing to God. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24). "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there." (Acts 20:22). "For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (Phil. 3: 3). "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." (Galatians 5: 16). "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Galatians 5:25). "What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding." (1 Corinthians 15:14). "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (1 Corinthians 2:13).

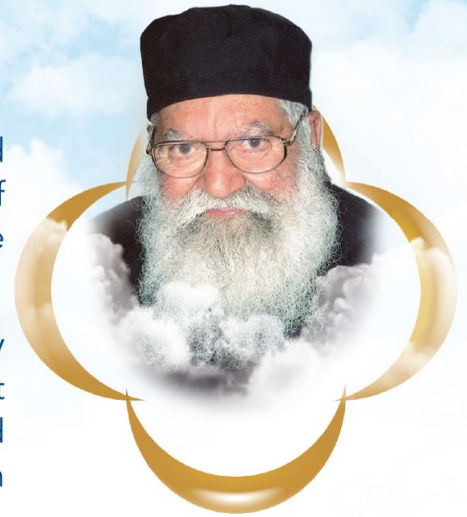
✦ *Hegumen Father Faltaous the Monk* ✦

The late Pope Shenouda III said about him: "A good and simple person full of good intentions in the life of monasticism, who used to memorize the sayings of the fathers and loves to implement them."

His Eminence Anba Metaos, Bishop of the Syrian monastery said about him that he was a model for the pure and silent hermit monk. His words were only with God in prayer and praise. He had fervent soul that was like the cherubim burning with fire.

He loved to read the lives of the holy fathers and their sayings. He had a wonderful way of narrating them and was heard sometimes talking about monastic saints such as Saint Isaac and the spiritual elders and others.

Among his famous virtues is avoiding himself from judging anyone, imitating Christ. His heart was pure like the heart of a child, considering everyone better than him. His looks and countenance were always pure and modest.





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