

His Holiness The Late Pope Kyrillos VI  
116 Pope of Alexandria and the See of St. Mark



"What about when Jesus calls the poor blessed? Well, in that saying, Jesus did not refer to those who are simply poor in worldly possessions. Rather, He referred to those who are poor in spirit—that is to say, those who are not puffed up with pride.

Such ones have the gentle and lowly dispositions of humility, not thinking of them more than they should think." (Disputation of Archelaus and Manes c. 320 E)\*

Our beloved late Pope Kyrollos was born in August 2, 1902. His mother named him, Azer. Coming from a wealthy family, Azer was well educated and could not only speak the language of his countrymen but English as well. Azer was destined by birthright, prestige, and education to be a man of fortune. His family ensured he would lack nothing meaningful of this world he would come to desire.

Because Azer's heart was not on this earthly world, he did not desire to flaunt his worldly possessions nor establish a comfortable life style for himself.

Shunning boastfulness, Azer did not show off his scholarly pursuits. Instead, his spending did not exceed his minimal needs. Thus was the style of living Azer lived.

The reason for conducting such a frugal life sprang from Azer's love for God, his Coptic Orthodox heritage, and the monastic way of life which exceeded everything else his heritage could afford him. His nature was known to be humble and gentle. There are no historical recordings of any argumentativeness, deceitfulness, or pride in the nature of this man, nor acceptance to serve the Lord in a manner that would not bring honor and glory to His Holy Name.

Azer's holy and spiritual personal desires were met with many confrontations not of his making. His family and friends strongly opposed his desire to lead a stringent life in the desert praying and serving the Lord. H.H. Pope Youannis strongly objected to his wish to become a monastic. How could such a revered pope who is highly cherished and perpetually honored have been met with such great opposition from family and the one who had the authority to grant or deny him entry into monasticism? Such a treatment nor was understandable and acceptable for someone less faithful and committed than Azer...

"Some persons hold possessions, gold, silver, and houses only as gifts of God, and they minister from them...They are superior to the possession of them. They are not the slaves of the things they possess...Furthermore, they are able to endure the loss of these things with a cheerful mind —the same as they can accept their abundance. These are the ones who are blessed by the Lord and are called 'poor in spirit'" (Clement of Alexandria, c. 195 E).

## **Objections to Monasticism**

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).*

Objections were directly related to the fact that in the early to mid 1900's monasticism was more commonly approached by the poor and those with little education. Perhaps, for those who came from less it was considered a less arduous task to humble themselves and give up their life. I believe the socioeconomic background of a monk is minor compared to the heart of a monk and that is what history has taught us today.

Azer was indoctrinated to the city dwelling way of life and rural ways were extremely unfamiliar to him. H.H. Pope Youannis is widely known to have told a future pope, "Son I have seen through my experience that the young men coming from major cities seldom

proceed with life in the monastery." Yet Azer told him "My hope and trust in God is very strong. I believe that if you bless and ask the Lord to grant me strength and success, I will succeed. The Lord Jesus Christ is fair and will not forsake those who love Him." H.H. Pope Youannis blessed Azer and supported him in the path of monkhood.

Azer entered the monastery of El-Baramous on July 27, 1927, at the age of twenty-five. It was through humility, innate, inherent kindness, gentleness and a strong desire that God blessed Azer, instilled respect for him by the bishop who would lead him and changed his family's hearts and attitude towards him.

A preconceived idea about someone can never be a reliable indicator of character. Ordained a monk, Azer, on February 25, 1928, was named Mina, the namesake of a youth, who also became a beloved saint and was known for his kind and gentle composure in adversity.

As a monk, Mina chose the most difficult jobs, serving the elders, washing their clothes, and filling their water jugs with consistent kindness. He enjoyed his tasks of serving others in quietude. Perhaps his special joy was derived from serving the elderly.

Truly an example of...

*"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).*

## **Priesthood and Papacy**

*"For the Lord... 'gave gifts to men,' and bestowed on those who believe in Him the power 'to tread upon serpents and scorpions,' that is, of the leader of apostasy" (Irenaeus c. 180 E/W).*

Monk Mina was ordained a priest in July 18, 1931. Priesthood was not considered a priority in Father Mina's life. It is well known that he wept upon learning of his next nomination as pope.

Committed to do as the Lord had directed him, Father Mina began to deepen his relationship with our Lord and desired more than communal monasticism. He sought a life of solitude and ventured further out into the desert. Thus Father Mina requested from H.H. Pope Youannis to allow him to live in the Eastern Mountain, near the Malak El Kibly Monastery in one of the windmills. His Holiness was concerned for Father Mina's safety since this mountain was a hiding place for criminals. Yet His Holiness succumbed at Father Mina's confirmation of his faith in God's assistance and comfort. Having had slept on the earth, preferring a

more private type of dwelling, content with scanty amounts of food, and living among God's creatures certainly instilled a natural type of gentleness and kindness that developed a higher level of spiritual fruitfulness. Stories about lions abound in the life history of the Coptic saints and I often hear children question, "Is this so? Did a lion almost devour the father of St. Mark?" This most recent pope is often illustrated with a lion sitting at his right side as his companion because lions and wild beasts would become tame surrounded by his spirituality and gentleness.

So great was his love for our Lord Jesus Christ, Father Mina was known for conducting the Divine Liturgies daily. Attending daily Divine Liturgies can only assist one in spiritual growth and surrendering of one's life to the Lord Jesus Christ. The commonly occurring question "why is the Coptic Divine Liturgy so long?" sends a message that perhaps someone needs to attend the Divine Liturgy more frequently in order to be able to talk about it the way they can comment on a good book they have just read or a project at home they have just completed or a special interest, all of which are much more time consuming in thought and energy than the Divine Liturgy and much less spiritually beneficial.

"Interesting are the news of the saints to the ears of the meek, as the water which the new branches absorb" (St. Isaac).

## **Accomplishments Abounded**

"Those who are truly His disciples, receiving grace from Him...perform works in His Name, in order to promote the welfare of others, according to the gift that each one has received from Him. Some truly and certainly cast out devils. The result is that those who have been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe and join themselves to the church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come. They see visions, and they utter prophetic expressions. Still others heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and the sick are made whole. What is more, as I have said, even the dead have been raised up and remained among us for many years. What more can I say? It is not impossible to name the number of the gifts which the church throughout the whole world has received from God in the name of Jesus Christ who was crucified under Pontius Pilate..." (Irenaeus, c. 180 E/W).

Succumbing to the recommendation, "*...Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven*" (Matthew 6:9), was a true test for the life desired and anticipated by

Father Mina which had not included priesthood nor the future leadership of the Coptic patriarchate.

From Father Mina to His Holiness, this transition in Pope Kyrillos' life was undisputedly favorable in the sight of God as evidenced by the abounding good works performed by the pope. Selected by God and for God to lead the Coptic Orthodox Church into the future, Pope Kyrollos was instrumental in the leadership of the Monastery of St. Anba Samuel the Confessor at Zawarah.

Pope Kyrollos established the Monastery of St. Mina at Mariout by the name of St. Mina, his beloved intercessor and spiritual companion. Pope Kyrillos blessed the relics of St. Mina. He also built a church in Old Cairo under the name of St. Mina. Pope Kyrillos lived in their church until his ordination as patriarch May 10, 1959.

The new cathedral at Anba Rowesis was built under the leadership of Pope Kyrollos.

The Blessed Virgin Mary blessed Pope Kyrollos's era with her heavenly inspired transfiguration in Zaitoun which brought multitudes of wayward Copts back into the church.

Through the blessings of the Lord our God, many miracles told and untold, written and unwritten were



performed and came as commonplace at the prayers and by the hands of Pope Kyrillos. Four volumes of books have been dedicated to the known miracles of Pope Kyrollos.

"Before the Law, Adam spoke prophetically concerning the woman and the naming of the creatures. Noah preached repentance. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob gave many clear utterances about both present and future things" (Clement of Alexandria, c. 195 E).

Pope Kyrollos participated in the Sacred Unction and the Vespers Prayers and were a rite joyously revived by the pope.

Pope Kyrollos's good works and miracles often overshadow the evangelistic fact that this pope was the first to establish Coptic Churches in Asia, America, Canada, and Australia.

But perhaps the greatest of all acts performed by His Holiness Pope Kyrollos was the restoration from Italy of the body of St. Mark I, first Pope of Alexandria and the Patriarch of the See of St. Mark, the founder of the Coptic Orthodox Church and our first patriarch to Egypt its home.

## **Summary**

So blessed is the Coptic Orthodox Church with her inspired, inspiring, God-given succession of 117 popes of Alexandria and patriarchs of the See of St. Mark. The Coptic Orthodoxy is an origin succession patriarchate of futuristic stability. The Coptic Orthodox Church has an unbroken and unfaltering lineage of patriarchs each one having kept the faith in spite of all controversies, oppositions and adversaries. God has indeed blessed our Coptic Church.

"The shepherd's tent that belonged to Jacob was preserved at Edessa up to the time of Emperor Antoninus of the Romans..." (Julius Africanus c. 245 E).

Let us all ask for the blessings and prayers of His Holiness Pope Shenouda III and the intercessions of our beloved saint Pope Kyrillos VI both whom we love dearly,

Bishop Youssef  
Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern  
United States

Reference:

The Life of the Saint Pope Kyrollos the Sixth

\*Archelaus, 3rd century Christian bishop who publicly debated Manes, the founder of Manichaeism.