



**POPE KYRILLOS VI
AND THE
SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP**

Visit www.zeitun-eg.org and www.stmina-monastery.org

Introduction:

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

All that was written concerning you. Saint and Pope Kyrillos is only a poor reflection of the reality. Words cannot express what you deserve, you who have transported us from dissention and desolation to the richness of the soul and the warmth of the blessings by your prayers and masses. The sinner repented and faith was restored to the hardened hearts. Churches have become as pigeon-houses particularly after Virgin Mary blessed your era by her transfiguration. The objective for which you strived were realized, as you pursued our preacher Saint Mark, Porter of the Gospel, favourite of Jesus Christ.

By presenting in this booklet some of my memories of Pope Kyrillos, I respond to the insistence of many of his beloved, although I have presented many of them in my book "**My Memories of the Life of Pope Kyrillos**". It is difficult to include in one book all my memories of this great Pope who lived twelve years amidst us. In fact, the events of each day can fill a book.

I beseech God, that all I have written would be fruitful! and constructive for our spiritual development. May our souls be blessed with the pope's prayers, so that we may pursue the example which he set for us; for he himself has followed Jesus Christ, our Lord Saviour; to whom is the Eternal Glory unto the end of the world. Amen.

Father Raphael Ava Mina

SOME LINES FROM THE BIOGRAPHY OF POPE KYRILLOS VI

Born in August 1902 and was called Azer. He entered the Monastery of El-Baramous on July the 27th 1927. He was ordained a monk on February 25th 1928 and was named Mina. He was ordained a priest on July 31st- 1931.

He pursued a **life of solitude** at El Natron Valley ⁽¹⁾- then in a windmill in El Moukatam mountain⁽²⁾. He built a church at ancient Cairo under the name of **St. Mina**. He lived in this Church till his ordination as a patriarch in 1959. Before his ordainment, he headed the Monastery of Saint Anba Samuel ⁽³⁾ the Confessor **at Zawarah**⁽⁴⁾.

He was ordained a Patriarch, on Sunday May 10th- 1959. In his era, many achievements were carried out. Amongst which are:

The renovation of[^] the ancient cathedral of Saint Mark, the establishment of the Monastery of St. **Mina** at Mariout, and the new cathedral at Anba Rouis. For the first time, in the history of the Coptic Orthodox church, he established Coptic Orthodox churches in Asia, America, Canada and Australia. He sent priests to undertake religious services in Europe and Africa. He restored the body of St. Mark from Italy. In his era. Virgin Mary transfigured at Zeitun. The movements monasticism, translation as well as social service flourished. Many churches were built. He made the sacred unction ⁽⁵⁾

1. This valley is situated between Cairo and Alexandria.
2. This mountain is situated at the outskirts of Cairo.
3. Anba- It is a word originating from the word Abba i.e. Father
4. Zawarah is a city in upper Egypt.
5. The sacred unction is used for anointing the body of the person after being baptized, with the view of being sacred as the temple of God.

THE POPE AND HIS LOVE FOR THE LORD

His early love of God.

He was absorbed by the love of the Lord since his early youthhood.

This strong love reached the depth of his soul as manifested when he started, practicing the life of solitude in his private room, being content with little food and abandoning his comfortable bed, preferring the ground to it.

When the pope practised this austere life all these five years, he wished to go to the desert and become a monk. Yet, he encountered many obstacles as that of the opposition of his parents and friends. After surpassing all these problems, he was surprised by the objection of An-ba Youannis, the vice «vice pope» at that time. These objections were due to the fact that monasticism at that time was not approached except by the poor and those who had limited education. That was not the case of Azer. His family was rich and he had a good education in comparison to his peers, in addition to his knowledge of the English language. Moreover, he lived in the city and it was unusual for an urban to choose the life of monasticism. Anba Youannis said to him: «My son, the people who get used to urban life are incapable of pursuing the severe route of monasticism. Very few individuals attain this goal.»

All these obstacles, as well as others, did not discourage him. He succeeded in going out to the desert where he was ordained as a monk at the Monastery of **EI-Baramous**. At this time, he was twenty five years old.

He took the train in his way to the monastery, feeling great enthusiasm for this new life in which he would get rid of all the lusts of body and abandon the worldly appearances.

In his approach to this new life of austerity, Azer wanted to get rid of all the appearances of the world, starting this new world with his new conception of austerity. This was manifested when he got off the train at Hokaria station and he asked the conductor for the reason for which he did not wear a **fez** ⁽¹⁾. When Azer learned that this was due to the conductor's poverty, he took off his fez and gave it to him who expressed his thanks for that. When Azer also asked the train driver about his conditions, he complained of poverty. Therefore, Azer took off his jacket and gave it to him and promised to send his shirt, trousers and pants at his arrival to the monastery. Azer actually sent them to the said driver with a person who was visiting the monastery.

At his arrival to the monastery, Azer was extremely harsh on himself. He chose the most difficult jobs, serving the elder monks, washing their clothes, filling their jugs with water.

Azer was ordained as a priest at St. Mark church in Alexandria on July 1931, upon the request of Anba Youannis, and received the tradition of practicing the mass. His parents requested Anba Youannis to allow him to visit them. In spite of his accord, Azer, now called priest Mina did not agree on this visit except under great pressure. At the family house, a large banquet was set for his reception, but he refrained from eating any food and was content with only a cup of coffee. He returned immediately to the church, the thing which made Anba Youannis admire Azer for such great serenity and asceticism.

Heading to Solitude

Monasticism did not satisfy his thirst; but his love for the Lord was increasing by time, the fact which urged him to think of solitude. That is the path which all the great saints chose to fill themselves of God's benedictions and penetrate into God's immense glory as well as be in close contact with Jesus Christ.

(1) Head cover comparable to men's hat.

Before being ordained as a priest, Azer had already experienced the life of solitude when he fled from the bishopric and lived at the monastery of St. Anba Shenouda at Souhag ; before his final decision to approach the highest degree of solitude. Priest Mina was thirty years old at that time, young before such a great experience but strong. The assembly of monks refused his request, for fear that Satan should crush him with pride and false glory. The assembly also opposed his teacher, El Komos Abdel Messih El Massoudi who supported Azer's opinion. One of the elder monks blamed El Komos Abdel Messih saying: «Our father, have you not lived forty years in the monastery? Have you ever thought of solitude? Is there anyone amongst us who thought of living in the desert? I beg you, convince this young monk to drop this idea».

Another aged monk addressed father Mina (Pope Kyrillos) saying:

«You are only thirty years old and your monastic life is only five years. Do you want to pursue the life of solitude in the desert; where as many others before you have struggled for the same goal for thirty or forty years but failed?»

The aged monks could not make father Mina change his decision and he attained his goal of living alone in the desert inspite of all these strong waves of oppositions. Because he loved the Lord from all his heart, and mind and he wanted to think of Him day night. It was a hidden internal power which urged him to go to the desert where he could satisfy his love for God.

Priest Mina left the monastery to the desert after he promised to obey the old monks, and to visit the monastery regularly every Saturday and Sunday in order to be instructed by his teacher. El Komos Abdel Messih El Massoudi, to assist in the Saturday evening prayers, and the Sunday Masses.

He left the monastery, and stayed in a deserted cave where 'a solitary monk, called Anba Sarabamon, lived.

Because of his love to God, there was nothing difficult or impossible, and he chose the route of solitude so as to be close to God. After he left El Natron Valley, he lived on Mokattam mountain in a deserted windmill. He lived in it in the same condition as he found it, without a door or a bed. Why? Because he found real comfort in his God the saviour. He lived in such a deserted place, without fear, with the reptiles, and wild animals which did not harm him as the saint prophets when God muzzled ravening lions.

Attacks of Satan

Satan waged wars against Father Mina when he saw him relentless, strong willed, attempting to let him abandon his solitude, and spoil his paradise on earth. But God always supported Father Mina.

Therefore, Satan devised another strategy, instigating the guard of the antiquities not to carry water to the solitary monk. Thereupon one of the saints appeared to the guard in the image of an old respectable man, and rebuked him for his misconduct and threatened him. So, he immediately woke up at midnight, and carried water to Father Mina who was in urgent need for it; the thing which filled his heart with joy, and he thanked God for that.

When the inspector of Antiquities attempted to drive father Mina out of the mill without any reason, and addressed the modest simple monk, in an indecent manner. God instigated fear and terror in the heart of the inspector's wife by a vision of father Mina in a dream, rebuked her. The next morning, the inspector and his wife knocked at the door of the mill, declaring their apology and regret.

Father Mina, underwent another ordeal. Satan, the enemy of human race sent robbers who beat him and injured his head. Father Mina fainted, and when he gained his consciousness, he noticed that he was bleeding, so he crept till he reached the picture of his best friend, St. Mina, and he put it on the injury. Thereupon, the bleeding stopped.

at once. He then headed to Hermal hospital where he was treated. The doctors were surprised when they found out that he came walking for six kilometers (the distance from the mill to the hospital) with all his bleeding and that he was a solitary monk who only ate lentils.

In spite of all these obstacles, father Mina persevered in the route of solitary life regarding it as the bridge which would lead him to the treasure which did not spoil.

One of the evidence of the pope's love to the life of solitude, and his disregard of earthly life was what he told me at the memorable day of the inauguration of the new cathedral and the return of St. Mark's body to Egypt, amidst all the splendid ceremonies in which President Gamal Abdal Nasser participated together with the Emperor of Ethiopia as well as delegations from all the churches all over the world. Following these ceremonies, his pontiff asked me: «My son, have you seen all these great ceremonies?» I said: «Yes». He repeated the same question, and I answered him saying: «May God prolong your life, and may all your days be crowned with ceremonies». Then the pope surprised me by saying: «But my son, all these ceremonies are not equal to one day in the windmill in Ancient Cairo».

Particular Method

Pope Kyrillos pursued a unique method to express his love to God. This method characterized him in a particular from all the other monks, and those who worshiped God, mentioned in the history of our church. He rejoiced tremendously when he stood before God's altar to present the Eucharist. His objective was to derive power from God. He was asked about the reason of holding these daily masses. His answer was extremely simple: «If the priest is present, flour is handy, and the altar is available, if we don't pray, what shall we say to God?!». He pursued this simple logic, being motivated by his instinctive eagerness to stand within the hands of the Lord.

All testified that the pope's love of holding masses was unique as Pope Shenouda referred to this trait saying:

«In all the history of our church, no one celebrated as many masses as Pope Kyrillos did. Pope Kyrillos celebrated more than 12 000 masses. Such event had never happened before in the history of any Pope of Alexandria, or in the world, or among the monks. He was formidable in his prayers».

The reverend Father El Komous Mina (the first deacon of Pope Kyrillos) and the head of the monastery of martyr St. Mina said:

«Pope Kyrillos represents not only a golden era in the history of the church... but he was and is still a great school which is distinguished by its ecclesiastical and spiritual philosophy. This school will always remain glorious for many forthcoming centuries owing to the depth of its spirituality.»

In fact, words are still incapable of expressing the degree of the pope's love to his saviour, that love which reflects a deep internal spiritual life. The pope's actions revealed his profound love for God. He underwent appendectomy. While he was recovering from anesthesia, Father Mina did not reveal any repressed emotions as maintained by the psychiatrists about those who lead a virtuous life. Father Mina, at the moment of the surgery and after, had a full peace which dominated all his senses. For that reason, the only thing heard from him was psalms and religious chants.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PASTORSHIP

His Flee From the Bishopric

The salvation of the spirit is the message of the church of Jesus Christ. It is the basis and centre of all its activities: prayers, tradition and diverse service.

The duty of the pastor as defined by the Lord of the Church is to sacrifice himself for his sheep. Thereupon the responsibility was great. Owing to this fact, certain father saints escaped from this responsibility, and there were others who were taken chained to it against their will.

It is not strange to find that father Mina the monk, whose life, and heart were filled with God's love, and who preferred the life of solitude away from the world, reluctant to undertake any administration of the church. At the beginning of his life of solitude, Anba Youannis wanted to ordain him as a bishop but father Mina fled from the Clerical College at Helwan, where he was studying, to find refuge at the monastery of St. Anba Shenouda at Souhag in upper Egypt.

On his return from the monastery, he started his solitude for many *years* in a cave at El Natron Valley, then in a windmill in Ancient Cairo where he stayed away from the world, and all its belongings.

Tears at the day of happiness

When all the hearts implored the Lord to save the church of all disgraces, and all unanimously agreed to nominate all candidates for papal elections from monks, some of the admirers of father Mina requested him to nominate himself, but he strongly refused. The reposed Bishop Athanasius, vice patriarch at that time, nominated him without

consulting him. When Father Mina learnt of this, he warned his sons and friends of waging any propaganda for his election.

When God's choice was declared and father Mina was chosen, he wept and refused to ring the church bells during the prayers to declare his happiness for his nomination. After finishing the mass, he stood in front of the door of the sanctuary with tears in his eyes, imploring God who has chosen him, to support him in a surpassing what he called the «new experiences»

On the day of his ordainment as a pope, he wept a lot, admitting his weakness in front of this colossal burden of responsibility. Many have warmly kept the photo of the pope with tears in his eyes. The German historian, Otto Meinardus issued his book, «**Monks and Monasteries of the Egyptian deserts**» with a anique picture of the sadpope. This is an evidence of the impact which the true tears have left.

Dr. Ibrahim Said (Chief of the Anglican Congregation) was really impressed by these tears. He said: «The greatest thing that impressed me... are these rich tears shed by the pope in front of the door of the sanctuary before his ordainment. In my opinion, they were more precious than the jewels which decorated his crown.»⁰

Since that time, he was closely attached to the pope and visited him regularly.

Ordainment Day

Brother, let us recall some of the incidents of this historical day of the ordainment of Pope Kyrillos the sixth which started a golden bright era in the history of the church in its contemporary age, with the view of seeing how God's men act when chosen to assume a responsibility in which the spirits of the people are the most difficult.

Our day started approximately at 2:30 a.m., when the guard of the papal residence was surprised by a person walking in the yard. **He**

(1) Massr: Newspaper, May, 10, 1960.

shouted at him and then approached to recognize his identity, but he realized. He was the elected pope. Father Mina asked him to open the church so as to raise the blessing «Tasbeha». The guard informed him that the deacons would arrive at 4:00 a.m. for this purpose. But father Mina expressed his desire to start at that hour, so the guard obeyed. Father Mina entered the church, prostrated before God's sacred sanctuary lighted some candles and raised the blessing. When the deacons arrived at the patriarchate, they were totally amazed because of this unprecedented example of a pope who prayed the blessing like that. Following that. Father Mina raised the morning incenses amidst the astonishment of all assistants. Then in the small church annexed to the cathedral, he sat waiting for the father priest who would pray the first mass. Many beseeched him to rest a little till the arrival of metropolitans who would ordain him. But he insisted on assisting in the first mass as he regarded it as his source of consolations. He stood in the corner of the sanctuary, weeping and imploring God's support in his new mission. After assisting in the mass, the pope retreated in his cell. Then he was accompanied to the church with a great multitude of metropolitans, bishops and deacons where he was given the keys of the cathedral. He opened the door saying: «Open to me the gates of righteousness, I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord: This is the gate of the Lord into which the righteousness shall enter. I will praise you: For you have heard me, and have been my salvation.» Psalm 118 (19-21)

Then he entered the church and humbly prostrated in front of the sanctuary, remained in this position for a long time. Thus the reposed Anba Athanasios, the vice-pope, said to him: «Rise up, father Mina and let us start.» Father Mina rose up, with tears filling his illuminated face. Anba Athanasios said: «The Lord who chose you, will assist you. Do not be troubled». Then the ordainment rites started and all the metropolitans laid their hands on his head. Then Anba Athanasios anointed his forehead three times saying: «We ordain you Pope Kyrillos the sixth, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark.» And each time the people unanimously answered: «Amen Kyrie

Eleison».¹ Then Pope Kyrillos advanced to kiss the Altar and took the pastoral cane. Then, he went out of the Sanctuary holding the cross in his right hand, and the pastoral cane in the left hand; and he was seated on the Throne of St. Mark.

He stood to read the gospel and instead of reading: «I am the good shepherd», he said: «Jesus Christ said: I am the good shepherd.» The people unanimously answered in one voice: "Axious". (i.e. you deserve that) three times. The pope's eyes were filled with tears.

Following that, the first papal message which was written by the Pope himself was read. He repeated the saying of St. **Paul**.

«Neither count I life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus.» (Acts of Apostles 20:24) knowing that «my joy, and my proud reward and crown; it is you.» (Thessalonians 2, 19) because my joy is in your success, and my happiness is in fastness of your faith, and your strong hope, and your increasing charity.

These verses chosen by the pope in his first message to his sons had their significance as they indicated that a new era of true pastoral responsibility started. God sent Pope Kyrillos as a just compensation of all these barren, drought long years in which we experienced bitterness, humiliation and loss.

True Paternity

After the enthronement ceremonies, the pope declared that by becoming the pastor, he was also the loving and vigilant pastor of all. At the end of the mass, all people gathered around him, and he began blessing them individually, standing for long hours without tediousness or fatigue but with meekness and patience. The metropolitans felt pity for him after noticing the sweat pouring over his face and beseeched him to

1. Greek word which means «Have mercy on us»

take a little rest. But the pope refused to send any one away, and insisted on filling every heart with happiness whether young or old. Every one returned home, glorifying God for what he saw or heard.

Dear brother, let us meditate over the events of that memorable glorious day. We are certain that the pope's prayers which started dawn, and his authentic sincere tears shed are more expressive than any words said. They left their profound impressions on many spirits, even of those who were alienated from the church. Time is not ripe for mentioning names or identifying persons, who were witnesses of these verities.

Dear reader, the pope's awareness of the enormous responsibility laid on this shoulder, was not only obvious at this point, but it was also manifested from the first day of his enthronement. The pope abolished any barrier between him and his sons. As God chose him to be their shepherd to protect them from evil and wickedness, help the weak, and take the hand of those who stumble. Consequently, my dear brother, for that reason, you could meet your father pope whenever in need, even if he was sick, or even if you come by night while all people were asleep. Even if he was asleep, St. Mina would awaken him. Dear brother, you might have previously read about the physician who went to Pope Kyrillos to pray for him, after all medical efforts failed to cure him, but the pope was asleep at that time so the physician was about to leave. But Mari Mina awakened the pope to give blessing to his son outside. The physician was surprised to find the pope calling him by name as he had never seen him before.

Spiritual Revolution

It is important that the new generation should realize the following truths about the era of Pope Kyrillos:

1. The pope was a leader without attendants. The relationship between him and millions of people was direct. You can tell him what you want in his ears directly as the pontiff Pope Shenouda III, commented. Before him, the church previously suffered from the intervention of the attendants, the fact which caused the dispersion of the herd; and offended the reputation of the glorious throne of St. Mark. Pope Kyrillos eliminated this nightmare which threatened the church, thus in his era, the church was blessed with the sacred spirit.

2. In his era Simonism¹ had been erased, and priesthood restored its eligible reverence and respect. Many individuals holding very high academic qualification were integrated into priesthood.

3. He issued a decree for the return of all monks to their monasteries. All testify that Pope Kyrillos was by God's assistance, the first patriarch who could force the monks to return to their monasteries in our Contemporary epoch. This decree had been previously issued in other eras; but it was ineffective and the monks scattered in villages and towns.

Despite all the storms that rose against the church, pope Kyrillos restored to the church the illumination of its harmony so that all the world recognized in the church of Alexandria, the purity of its metal, and the Sacred Spirit overshadowed it. The Lord was pleased with our prayers and accepted our fastings. All the pope's efforts were fruitful.

The Happiness of St. Mark

Heaven confirmed the pope's virtuous route, and the fact that he entered the sheep fold by the door like true pastors, and did not climb it up; the thing which crowned all his achievements with success. This is a story which I witnessed, and I still recall all its incidents in my heart.

1. Simonism: derivated from the name of «Simon» the sorcerer who is mentioned in the book of «Acts», and who went to Saint Peter to buy the Holy spirit with money.

One Sunday, while raising the morning incenses I noticed the pope standing for a long time in front of the throne of St. Mark, while offering the incenses. He was praying silently and smiling. I was puzzled but could not dare to ask him questions. But the pope modestly called me, saying: «my son, Salute St. Mark». I said: «I cannot see anyone, my master». He said, «St. Mark is sitting happily on his throne. He was sad for more than thirty years. But now he is happy.» I answered him sadly. «My master, I cannot see anyone». Then the pope said: «May God reveal this to your eyes.» The pope continued in offering the incenses and praying for long, demanding the intercession and the benediction of St. Mark.

Brother, I hope that you would meditate a little on this incident, with the view of discerning its deep implications and absorbing the Lord's instruction which it indicated. This incident has its historical and didactic dimensions for which the pages of this brochure are not sufficient. These dimensions have their significance for those who study the history of the church.

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

The last precedent part leads us to speak of the pope as a spiritual leader. Spiritual leadership has its own nature which differentiate it from other earthly leaderships.

The essential characteristic aspect of the spiritual leader is that he is chosen by God as Moses, David, Samuel, so that God directs his life and guides his steps. He is attached to heaven by strong bonds. Heavenly heritage is his main concern whereas earthly glory is worthless and mortal.

The spiritual leader never refers any success achieved to his personal efforts, or think that his plans are the outcome of his intelligence; or that the word salvation he pronounces is the epitome of his intellect. He bears witness to the truth without prevarication, or evasion.

The Weapons of the Leader

Pope Kyrillos was a great spiritual leader as heaven testified. Prayers, fasting and humility were his weapons in front of God and the characteristic style of his life. The precedent pages prove these characteristic, the fact which made Pope Kyrillos resemble all the spiritual leaders presented in the Holy book, and whom we have recognized across the blessed history of the church.

God directed the Pope's life so he succeeded in every responsibility he undertook. Peace overshadowed the church in his era. Meanwhile desolation and enmity vanished. This was evident from the first day of his ordainment, where all hearts gathered around him. This

virtuous route has been marked by all the world. Heavenly declarations were manifested through the transfiguration of Our Virgin Mary, Mother of light, at El Zeitun Church. The incident propagated the name of the Coptic Church all over the world. Pope Kyrillos the simple monk who lived in the caves of earth and mountains, became known everywhere.

After becoming the Pope of Alexandria, Pope Kyrillos was committed to the life of asceticism and austerity. As in the days of his solitude, his food continued to be simple. He did not abandon his coarse simple clothes. Who saw his bed, could not imagine it belonged to the highest leader of the church.

On the door of the reception of the papal residence, Pope Kyrillos hanged this sign, the motto of his life: «Forsake worldly pleasures, God will love you. Renounce what people possess in their hands, people will love you. The one who seeks personal dignity, it will flee from him, while the one who flees from it, it will pursue him, and show him to the people.»

Path of Silence

Pope Kyrillos the Sixth preferred to follow the difficult path, as we were taught by our glorified Saviour. Thereupon, the pope stopped talking and replaced words by good example through action. Consequently, he believed that the heart which did not bend before the image of sanctity, and did not change in front of the good example, would not be influenced by preachers or words. We would like to refer to the fact, that the pope, who chose silence for his life and style, did not do that as a result of inaptitude or deficiency. Pope Kyrillos had been instructed at the hands of the great instructors: the talented and inspired preacher the deceased Eskandar Hanna, and the great scholar and spiritual guide, Father Abdel Messih El Massoudi. Pope Kyrillos was also a student of the great spiritual fathers by devoting himself to the study of their writings and by penetrating into their immortal spiritual heritage. Anba Youannis was pleased to listen to a sermon delivered by the monk Mina

in an evening prayer when he was studying at the Theological College at Helwan. Anba Youannis thought of ordaining him as a bishop after this sermon, but Father Mina fled from the Theological College at that time.

The Pope himself told me that what he gained from silence greatly exceeded what he would have achieved by any other means.

Responsible Pastor

How often did I see the pope in his old age weeping for those spirits alienated from the Lord and feeling sad for them, sighing and saying «A flock without a pastor...»

I constantly saw many individuals who visited the pope several times seeking his advice for an obstacle in their lives that threatened their peace. The pope never lost his patience, but directed his sons to peace. As a head pastor, the pope could have confined his concern to the public problems of leadership, abandoning all individual problems to the fathers of confession. But this is the trait of the fatherly pastor who seeks the repentance of his sons leading them to salvation.

We should not forget to remind our dear reader, that Pope Kyrillos, when he was a simple monk at St. Mina church at Ancient Cairo, built a residence for the students, who came to Cairo to accomplish their studies, as a shelter for their faith and chastity.

Moreover he annexed to this small church an edifice composed to five rooms and dedicated it to the training of the poor sons of the church on five various professions: textile, electricity, mechanics, welding and shell work. This project started with textile, and the pope entrusted one of his beloved sons, a textile engineer, with this task urging him not to forget his poor brothers. An electric textile equipment were installed, but Satan evoked the envious so they carried false information to the religious leadership at this time which warned him. Therefore, he was obliged to stop this project waiting for the return of one of his sons

from abroad, to entrust him with this task in a place far from his church. In fact this project developed and brought money to thousands of the needy Christian Egyptian families. Therefore Egypt, by this project recognized vocational training for the first time at the hands of monk, Mina, the solitary.

Testifying for Truth

The pope was always testifying for righteousness and nothing but that. He did not cease to blame and rebuke his sons and daughters for their bashful unreserved appearance, calling upon them to abide to the life of chastity and renounce all indecent appearances and the imitation of those who are alienated from God. He encouraged all, even the children, to be bashful and requested their parents to make their kids wear the proper clothes.

The pope never concealed the truth or flattered anyone. I recall that a person was close to the pope and used to visit him monthly. The pope, with his authentic paternity, and with his vigilant pastorhood gently requested him to return to the Orthodox Church, the mother church which surpassed all the Evangelic apostolic teachings. When the pope repeated his invitation several times, this person said: «Please, don't mention this subject again.» In another visit, when the pope raised the same subject, this person sighed and said «Every time, I tell myself, I am not going to the Pope again as he puts me in an awkward position each time. I do not know what brings me here. Please do not mention this subject again.»

It occurred that the same person tried to call the pope, but did not succeed as the private telephone number of the pope was changed. Therefore he called me and I gave him the new number. Then he called the pope and blamed him saying: «How could you change your phone number without informing me... I have been sick for three days suffering from...» The pope calmed him down saying «There is no sickness...

get up from bed.» Heaven quickly responded to the Pope's prayers and the said individual went the next day to the pope and kissed his hand, thanking him for his prayers which cured him.

At the time of the death of this person, the **pope** was at the Monastery of St. Mina at Mariout and commented saying: «How many times I have told him to return to the Orthodox church but he refused.»

I also recall that another young man said to the pope «I would like to serve the Lord.» And the pope said to him «go to Deacon Raphael, leave your name there and when God declares his will, we shall send to you.» Six months later, the same youth returned, accompanied by his wife and said to the pope: «My master, I resigned to devote all my time to the Lord.» The pope said: «My son, when God declares his will, we shall send to you.» The youth answered «ordain me a priest.» The pope looked at him and reproached him saying you would like to be a priest...» and then he described him with a word of reprimand and reproach. He looked at his wife and said to her «your husband is a priest...», and repeated the same statement.

The reality is that this youth had abandoned the Mother Church and affiliated to one of the non-orthodox sects which persuaded him to resign of his career and to work for them for a high salary together with other motives. All this took place before his last meeting with the pope. But he did not reveal anything to the pope.

This individual concealed all his actions from the pope; but the pope's vision showed that he realized the reality of this individual's behaviour. But the same individual ignored the pope's advice and joined the other religious non-orthodox sects and worked for them. The thing which made his wife sad and she had to remind him of the pope's advice. Showing him the advantages of his Coptic Church. For three years, she continued in her attempts of persuasion, without despair, praying heartily for him till he returned again to the Coptic Orthodox Church.

I testify in front of God, that during all the years of my service to the pope that he was never hostile or spiteful to any; or engaged into conflict against any one who opposed him. On the contrary, I always saw him embracing all with his love. He loved even his enemies and entrusted them with important responsibilities.

The pope never lost his internal peace even amidst the most crucial problems that confronted him. He always looked happy reflecting peace on all those surrounding him. We were greatly amazed by that impression and we felt as if he was like an unshakable mountain never influenced by difficulties or obstacles.

Miracles

God has accorded to the pope the blessing of performing remarkable miracles. One word pronounced by him could solve problems, cure the sick and realize all demands and oust the wicked spirits. He always carried the holy cross which always supported him.

I recall a miracle which happened to me after the repose of the pope which is an evidence of the rapidity of God's response to those who pray to him and ask for the intercession of the pope. **It also indicated the pope's esteem as regards God.** I received a letter from one of my relatives, Mounir Tawfik Soliman complaining of his aggravating illness. Several weeks later, I thought of visiting him but I hesitated not knowing what to do. One day, in the early morning, at 4:00 a.m., I asked the Lord to help me. Then I stood in front of the pope's picture and said: «Pope Kyrillos, If you approve this voyage or this visit, facilitate it for me. I would like you to precede me in every place I visit.» Then I prayed: «Our father in heaven»... I started my voyage (1) and I

1. Means of transportation for this destination where father Raphael was heading were uncomfortable.

felt God's presence with me as he guided all my steps. When I arrived at my relative's home, I was surprised to find that he passed away sixteen days ago. I wept, being impressed by his early departure to heaven in his youth. However, his mother informed me that she was greatly consoled that day as she woke up at 4:00 a.m. on a beautiful vision. She saw pope Kyrillos the sixth embracing her son Mounir and said to her «Do not be afraid, Mounir is with me. Don't be sad for him.» The mother was happy and thanked God. I told them that I requested pope Kyrillos at this same moment to precede me to them, and he did, and consoled them. We glorified God and returned back happily thanking God and Pope Kyrillos.

His Stubborn Adversaries

His adversaries who insisted on their opposition to the pope were frustrated in their attempts.

One example of that was that man who came to the pope, as a spokesman of one of the parishes, and he insulted the pope. God's chosen pastor. The pope reproached him saying: «Go away... Go away.» This miserable man left the pope, but never went home and was hit by a car which killed him.

Another example I recall, was that bishop who plotted against the pope and revoked some bishoprics against him, died by mistakenly taking poison in place of medicine. His death was a result of his plot against the favourite of Jesus Christ, the twentieth Century prophet.

I am incapable, as others, of enumerating the characteristics of the Pope as a great spiritual leader who pursued the path of the sacred prophets. All his actions and steps were planned by God; even the name had been chosen by heaven. After his divine elections, all predictions indicated that he would be called pope Mina the third, on the name of his patron and great intercessor St. Mina, performer of miracles. But he

asked to be named Kyrillos the sixth. When asked for the reason of choosing that name, he answered that after the appearance of the results of divine elections, he saw the following vision. Pope Kyrillos the fifth coming to him carrying a beautiful baby in his hands and said, «Abouna Mina hold this baby, you will coddle the benedictions as you are coddling this baby in your hands. Moreover the benediction will coddle you as you are coddling this baby.»

This vision was realized as the benedictions were filling Pope Kyrillos and his name was counted among the sacred saints and the blessed apostles.

Another story happened at the day of ordainment. When Pope Kyrillos entered the sanctuary to receive the pastor cane, he noticed that the silver box containing the gospel was the same one he lost in 1952. He was surprised and commented saying: «We had lost this box in Ancient Cairo.» Deacon Youssef Mansour approached him and said: «It preceded you to the cathedral.

It seems that it was stolen and sold to an honest person who gave it as a present to the patriarchate. God wanted to announce his will so it already preceded the pope to the patriarchate as a prediction of what would take place.

DEPARTURE TO HEAVEN

At the end, God wanted to rest the Pope's soul from the worries of the mortal world, after he accomplished his strife in the best form. Through his conversations the pope alluded many times to the fact that the hour of his departure approached. However the world was shocked by the departure of this saint the morning of Tuesday, March 9th 1971 (30 Amshir 1687 according to the Calendar of the Martyrs)⁽¹⁾. Before the pope retreated to his room to rest forever in the bosom of the saints, he inquired about the news of all the attendants at the pope's residence and bid farewell to his visitors saying to them «May God take care of you». The day of his departure, was a memorable day and this was expressed by Reverend Anba Gregorious, Bishop of Scientific Research saying:
«God has honoured you in your death with this unique magnificent farewell which disclosed all your love, all your fidelity and all your splendors because of your righteous route and your sacred life.»

The sacred body was buried close to the body of St. mark the preaching apostle, in the great cathedral at Anba Rouis till he was transported to his monastery at Mariout according to his will.

The day of the transportation his Sacred body to St. Mina Monastery at Mariout Desert was a great day of grandeur, the sacred body was placed in front of the altar of St. Mark Cathedral at Anba Rouis and prayers were held. Pope Shenouda delivered a great speech, in which he enumerated a number of the virtues of Pope Kyrillos and he also read the text of the Pope's written will. After the end of the prayers, lightening and thunder occurred and it rained. The next day, at 8.00 a.m. the body was carried to the car which would transport it to

1. The Egyptian Christians have their own calendar according to the end of persecutions.
2. This heavy rain is unusual for the desert.

Saint Mina Monastery. At this moment, there was unprecedented lightening and heavy rains.⁽¹⁾ This was considered as a participation of nature to declare its sorrow for the pope's departure away from Cairo. Whereas in Alexandria, the rains were lighter than those in Cairo, in contradiction to what usually happens. Consequently the meteorologists affirmed that this was an unexpected event. The newspapers commented on this event.

Great crowds and priests were waiting for the arrival of the sacred body to the monastery. When it arrived, the bells rang and it was carried by the people, and taken into the church amidst hymns and religious chants. Then pope Shenouda III accompanied by the bishops raised the evening incenses while offering evening prayers. Following that, the sacred body was carried to the place arranged for it under the main altar of the great cathedral at the monastery. The Arabs were the first who hastened to carry the body on their shoulders amidst great happiness, as it would repose in the desert where they live. Thus, they would be blessed by its benedictions.

All the attendants at the church spent the night praising the Lord and singing hymns till the morning. Then the Lord's mass was held and the tomb was closed. In fact, this was a terrifying moment. The next day morning, it rained heavily and the Arabs crowded at the monastery seeking the benedictions of the saint of the desert ^ whose presence was accompanied by the flooding of rain, the vital element of their lives.

His tomb became a sacred place for international visitors. Many individuals of various religious sects and countries implore his blessing and seek his effective intercession to the divine throne.

May his benedictions be with us.

1. Thunder showers are an extreme rarity in Cairo
2. **This heavy rain is unusual for the desert.**

The letter of Fr. John of the Anglican Church

24 June 1986

Dear Dr. Gabriel,

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. One God. Amen.

I am deeply indebted to you and your colleagues for sending me the booklet Pope Kyrillos VI and the Spiritual Leadership which arrived this morning and which I have just read with great interest. It was also most thoughtful of you to send a spare copy which I am sending to the Library of the House of SS. Gregory and Macrina at Oxford. This Library is kept by my distinguished friend and colleague Dr. Sebastian Brock - Professor of Syriac and Aramaic in Oxford University and translator of St. Isaac the Syrian. I am able to send them some books on the Coptic Orthodox Church when I receive more than one, which, thanks to God, has been on a number of occasions. So, you will know that in addition to joining my Library of Coptology - which is quite substantial - your book will also be permanently available in one of our great Universities. The House of SS. Gregory and Macrina is a residence for Orthodox students of all ages who study in Oxford. I know a number of Coptic Orthodox priests who have stayed there.

It seems to me that Abba Kyrillos VI has a special importance in these unbelieving times. He represents to us the greatest spiritual tradition of the Fathers, the simplicity of life which is so lacking in the World and the accessibility which is the essential for a true bishop - I am afraid that Western bishops are usually quite unapproachable and will not even give a priest an interview. The Anglican Church, in which I have been ordained for 20 years, is haunted by heresy and heresiarchs like the Bishop of Durham are quite common.

Please convey my sincere thanks and greeting in Christ to your brothers in Pope Kyrillos VI Publications. I hope that you will be able to publish much more. I will pray that God will bless your work - thank you for the picture of Abba Kyrillos. Do you know that the excellent iconographer, Stephane Rene [Stephanos] has painted a large icon of Abba Kyrillos? It is very good. I will attempt to get a photo of it.

Yours in Christ,
The unworthy priest,

Fr. John
Father John.

NOTE

The Rev. John Watson M.A. P.H.D., F.R.A.S. is an Anglican priest who is very enthusiastic about the Coptic Orthodox church, and has written extensively about it during the last seven years both in Coptic and international magazines in Europe and America. He is now Chaplain of Satton Valence School, Kent, England.

At the inauguration of the cathedral of the great martyr St. Mina at Mariout, November 24, 1976 Pope Shenouda stated:

Today, Saint Mina is happy because of the foundation of this great cathedral in his monastery. Today, the spirit of Pope Kyrillos **VI** also rejoices as he put the foundation of this church. No doubt, he is happy now for this accomplishment of the construction of the church. No doubt he prays with you, today and blesses you all.