



EL-MINIA VISIT SUMMER 2014

St Mark Universal Copts Care



AUTUMN 2014

Looking out the Blindside

In the early hours of Wednesday morning we set off. A friend pointed out we'd been driving through poverty-ridden areas for at least 30 minutes before arriving at the village of our destination – the poverty was rampant and widespread.

Excitement tinged with curiosity was my first impression of the village children, there was a smile here and there too. A boy with a mask and a boy playing with a branch of sugar cane; he'd attached small wheels either side of the branch to convert it into his personal push toy.

We go from house to house and listen to every person's story.

The living conditions border inhumane; naked bricks and stone floors, chickens in the kitchen and

mats for beds; these were homes but never houses. These people live simply and do not ask for much; medication, money for tuition, an oven. Basic human rights somehow eluded this area of the world, they never got the memo. Perhaps we never cared to send it.

The reality, like the sun, is too painful for our direct gaze, instinctively we look away. We shun these images to the blindside, and group the poor under one umbrella. That way we don't have to share in the pain of the individual. I read once only when we get close enough to catch the hurt of others are they close enough to feel our love. An injury to the body of Christ is an affliction to all, not an afterthought.

1.3 billion People live under extreme poverty today, but God knows the heart of each and every one of His children, for even the stars are numbered and named (Psalm 147). What then, should



A typical house in Ezbet Francis, El Minia



we say, does God know about the child with the water bucket, the boy bathing in the stream and the woman rooting through the trash? 30 minutes with a gentleman in this village opened my eyes to what endless hours of reading,

donating and fundraising never could. Our deeds and sense of duty must be deep rooted in love for our Maker, not obligation.

The Proverbs tell us that "*oppression to the poor is an insult to the God who made them, but that kindness to the poor is an act of worship*" (Proverbs 14:31), and King Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes that oppression is the abuse of power (Ecc 4:1). We must consider the ways in which we use the gifts God has entrusted to us, and when the time is due will we be able to say truthfully "*Lord, you delivered to me five talents, look; I have gained five more talents besides them*"?

If "*To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin*" (James 4) then I safely concluded if I was never return to these villages and do good, I would be one day be held accountable. I could never claim to love God if I ever close my heart against a brother or sister in need, as John the Beloved had written in his first epistle. I had left Christ hungry, thirsty, naked and sick, while I had returned to my comfortable apartment.

In another village we are surrounded by women who grew weary of their living conditions. One of them was crying, she was carrying a baby boy and her eyes were achingly desperate. Her husband was no longer around, and she was slowly losing her vision. She desperately needed funds for an operation and was already struggling to keep bread on the table for her son. This lady urged me to write her name down so I wouldn't forget her. I knew I didn't have to write it down to remember, but I did it anyway. Her name was Mariam Rizk.

On the way home, a friend asks me "what does the future hold for these children?" I didn't have an answer, but Psalm 34 springs to mind "*The LORD is close to the broken hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*" We would do well to remember the battle belongs to the Lord and not to us. We are not the solution, but only a channel through which God works. The potter shapes vases from the softest clay; we must be submissive, willing, and strive for purity of heart if we are ever bold enough to ask God to use us.

WHO HAVE WE HELPED THIS MONTH?



EL Noba, Sudan



Equipment purchased for El-Sheva Hospital, Beba

Charity Update

At present, St Mark Universal Copts Care is overseeing the long-term development of 7 healthcare centres across Egypt. These will serve to support all members of the local community through providing vital healthcare treatment and continuous care. This project aims to equip every hospital with modern technology and a solid framework to produce efficient, self-sufficient hospitals. The proposed project is planned in three phases:

- **Phase I** – A hospital surveying company is currently producing a detailed report on the practicalities of the hospital-frameworks that have already been built.
- **Phase II** – Once these reports have been finalised, SMUCC aims to implement the structural changes proposed, ensuring the hospital framework is structurally fit for purpose.

- **Phase III** – Once these changes have been approved by the diocese bishops, they will be materialised. The equipping process will begin and the hospitals will eventually be officially opened for public use.

The healthcare centres currently under survey are located in **Aswan, Luxor, Nakada, Sohag, Manfalout, Bany Mazar**, while **Al-Karma Health Centre** in **Marakez El-Shaquia** has already began Phase II preparations.

A grant application is also in process to aid with the refurbishments of **El-Sheva Hospital, Beba**.

Additionally a team from St Mark recently visited **El Noba** in **Sudan** to help support local education by building new classrooms and providing teaching facilities. If you would like to find out more, or contribute to one of the SMUCC projects please contact us on naser.fouad@stmarkuniversalcopts.org or refer to the charity website.

If you would like to send a donation:

12 Stanhope Road, Bowdon, Altrincham WA14 3JY

With HH Pope Tawadros II

By Samuel Saad

On the 19th August 2014 representatives of St Mark Universal Copts Care met with HH Pope Tawadros II during a trip to Egypt. This, by God's Grace, was the third time SMUCC members have met with the Pope. This latest meeting sought to discuss the multiple changes undergone by SMUCC over the recent months and to seek advice from the Pope regarding them.

The meeting was in held King Marriot, which is a 30 minute drive from St Mina's Monastery where the team took a blessing from the body of Pope Kyrillos III before the meeting.

The main purpose of the meeting was to inform the Pope and seek advice regarding the new strategies for Healthcare, Small Projects and

DID YOU KNOW?

18%

Around 1.3 people live in absolute poverty. That's almost a fifth of the world!

On 25th June 1968, St Mark's Coptic Cathedral received some of the relics of St Mark. The relics had been kept until then in Venice, Italy, by the Roman Catholic Church.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Have a look at our website at:
www.stmarkuniversalcopts.org

Follow us on twitter:
[@StMarkUniversal](https://twitter.com/StMarkUniversal)

Or send us an email:
Naser.fouad@stmarkuniversalcopts.org

Marriage support. The trip to America was also discussed as well as partnerships newly formed with other UK charities.

The Pope was pleased with the cooperation of the bishops in filling out the forms investigating the needs in their diocese, with only five not responding. The work of our SMUCC representative in Europe in Geneva, Brussels and Paris was also mentioned. The Pope had no objection to the fact that we had already started work as a charity in 3 diocese including Marakez el Sharkeya due to their extreme poverty.

The Pope discussed options regarding marriage support mentioning that although appliances would help, there was a need for liquid money. He agreed with the team that local management of small project would be more practical than central management. The Pope proposed that in addition to the charities healthcare plans, including the purchase of a pharmaceutical distribution centre, he would like to see the training of young girls as nurses.

After discussion it was agreed with the Pope that it would not be fruitful to start work in every diocese. It would be more effective to begin in a few and once successful there then to branch out. Since then, SMUCC has settled on eight dioceses.

The suggested dioceses include:

1. Elbehera
2. Marakez Elsharquia
3. Old Egypt and Ezbet Elhagana
4. East Train
5. Der Mawas & Delga
6. Tima
7. Akhmim
8. Aswan



As a team we thank God for allowing SMUCC to meet with his Holiness and for giving him the confidence to back us in our work.

We pray that with his support we can continue to serve in Egypt with organisation to match our passion.

In Christ.

GET INVOLVED!

Serve to Learn

"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet"

John 13: 14

Serve to learn is a programme for youth to serve our brothers and sisters in Egypt. Led by Coptic Orphans, you will travel to Egypt and teach English with various activities and courses in a predetermined 3 week period. This is an unmissable opportunity and you will serve with other youth from all around the globe either in January or July 2015. Truly this is a way in which we can try and fulfil this commandment Jesus has given us.

Please contact
bishop.dimitri@stmarkuniversalcopts.org
or call 07532333552 for more information

If you would like to send a donation:

12 Stanhope Road, Bowdon, Altrincham WA14 3JY

Egypt and Fayoum's lamplight

By Mary Hanna

"It is in giving that we are receiving, and it is in receiving that we are pardoned." St Francis of Assisi

What would you do if you saw a homeless person on the street? We all see it nowadays, more often than we would like, but we still all see it. What would you do? Some may passively carry on walking. You're in a rush, you've had a bad day; *after all, someone else will spare some change, right?* Some may give their money, but silently wonder if it will actually be spent on something sensible. And sadly, some may even look with eyes full of judgment and blame and make the direct assumption that this person brought it on themselves. *Don't worry, they can't read your mind anyway.* However in any case, the heart is transparent to the One who created it. God sees us through our hearts! Do we long for earthly praise but not for Heavenly grace? Do we look down on the needy but never help them up? *Do we just give as an obligation but not as a dedication?*

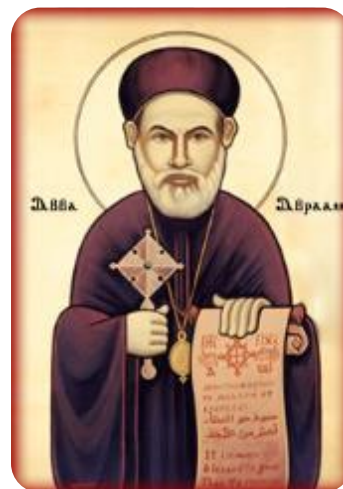
One man gave his all. His eyes were so fixated on Heaven that his heart was so immersed in giving. This man was the blessed Anba Abraam.

After a lonely childhood, losing his mother at only 8 years old, Paul Gabriel was ordained a monk at the age of 19 and became Father Paul El-Meharraki. His patience and self-control gained him respect and love from the other monks and they eventually chose him to be in charge of the monastery. He opened the doors of the monastery to the poor as well as opening the doors of his heart to Christ Jesus more and more

every day. Any goodness, however, leaves the devil restless and so he made some of the monks think that Father Paul was wasting the money of the monastery and they rebelled against him. In 1870, Fr. Paul was asked to leave the monastery after being in charge for five years. His heart was so hidden in the palm of God's hand that human affirmation left him unaffected. As St Paul said in Galatians 1: 10: "If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ." He continued giving and sharing everything he had to the poor and in 1881 the Ethiopian Emperor, John Kassa asked Pope Kyrillos to ordain a metropolitan and three Bishops for the Ethiopian Empire, so he chose the four fathers who were accompanying Fr. Paul at the time. Meanwhile at the same time, Anba Isaac the metropolitan of the province of Fayoum and Giza departed, so the four fathers asked the Pope to ordain Fr. Paul as a bishop for that diocese. And after being asked to leave the monastery in 1870, 11 years later Fr. Paul became Anba Abraam; the new bishop of Fayoum of Egypt.

During his time, the Dioceses of Fayoum became a great vine between the rich and poor, bestowing a humbling level of equality amongst them. And in the Doxology for Anba Abraam, he is described as *"The lamp that lights Fayoum and all of Egypt for his wonders and miracles and his love for Christ."*

Anba Abraam was an avid reader of the Psalms. In Psalm 72:13 it says "He opens a place in His **heart** for the down-and-out, He restores the wretched of the earth." How



precious! *God's very own heart.* We as servants should echo Christ and open a place in our hearts for the needy, just as Anba Abraam did. It was one said that "the charity that is a trifle to us can be precious to others", well, I don't entirely agree. It's not just a trifle to us. It is precious because He who "rescues the poor at the first sight of need" (Psalm 72:12) is *present* when we give. And what could be richer than living in the presence of God? Anba Abraam gave his heart to the poor, and so gained his riches in Heaven.

Here is a verse from the Doxology for Anba Abraam:

***"The lovers of material things
Sought new buildings
But you built in heaven
Heavenly new places"***

Every time we give, we lay a brick in our home in heaven, and God is the cement that binds it all together. Be it some spare change or an expensive cheque, there are no "rankings" from God's viewpoint. It's all equivalent because He looks at the *heart*.

May the intercessions of Anba Abraam be with us always, and may we truly and honestly learn how to give from the heart.

If you would like to send a donation:

12 Stanhope Road, Bowdon, Altrincham WA14 3JY

The Flaming Heart

By Hannah Saad

"Meet God's inflamed Spirit and you will become a blessed flame"

Fr. Taros Y. Malaty

Many of us openly admit our love to Christ, we are not ashamed. However, many of us also stand to pray and do not feel God's presence, we feel confused, puzzled and untouched when we have read the bible and upon entering the house of God we feel no spiritual awe. In other words we lack the presence of God. We must strive to attain a flaming heart. Now what is a flaming heart? A flaming heart is no ordinary heart. It isn't a heart consumed by worldly

things, it is a heart alive and on fire with Holy Spirit.

Our hearts must be attached to The Lord, not close to, not beside, but attached. We must let the Lord inside us, in the form of the Holy Spirit, and we must let God work within us. A flaming heart alone has immense power, not only will it cleanse us but it has the ability to transform the callous hearts of others into warm, loving, and gracious hearts. Godly hearts, for God created us in his image so it is only fitting that we strive to accommodate him and have God-yearning, God-like hearts.

A flaming heart does not fear worldly issues, this is something everyone struggles with, we fear the opinion of others, the results of exams, and most importantly, the future. We all fear the future, whether it is employment, accommodation or relationships, not one day goes by when we don't think about our future. However, the real issue is that we don't see God in our future. The Almighty who created us and has a plan for our lives, He has a plan for us, we needn't worry.

"I do not fear tomorrow, for I know that God is already there" -unknown-

With the Holy Spirit within us and a flaming heart, we will confront sin with His power. Sin cannot hurt us; it cannot get to us for we are protected by the fiery spirit. A flaming heart has the ability to transform and revive not only ourselves but the people around us also. For it is a duty as Ambassadors of Christ to shine with the glory of God. For we are not ordinary, we do not conform to this world.

"If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, then the only explanation is that we were made for another world"
C.S Lewis

We cannot attain a flaming heart by knowledge; it is a seed that a God himself plants in the believer's heart. We must hold the true image of God in our hearts and be overcome with his grace and power.

*It's hard to understand
Impossible to put into perspective
That someone planned your life
It was meant to be this hectic*

*God is not to be underestimated
God isn't measurable or contained
One cannot imagine
He's a lion that can't be tamed*

*Not only is He our Maker
He lives within us too
The Lord he is our Creator
He lives within us, that much is true*

*We pray to feel the presence of Him
Of our Holy Father from above
The future it is not grim
For God descend as a dove*

*He lives with us now
Planned our every move
He will not forsake us
This battle we shall never lose*

*So there's a God, Jesus and Spirit,
everything from nothing, lived on this
world yet not of this world Saviour who
lives in us as a fiery spirit*

*Who planned every minute of your life
No moment was unexpected
Pretty crazy right?*

St Mark
Universal
Copts
Care
Autumn
2014

Registered Charity
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