

Lesson (26)

Pope Kyrillos VI

Story Time

Abba Kyrillos, was born on the 2nd day of August, 1902, in the city of Damanhour. His parents were pious and fear God. His father was a deacon. At age 25 he joined El-Baramus Monastery and ordained monk on February 25, 1928, and ordained priest on July 18, 1931. Later he left the monastery and lived a life of solitude in a cave in the desert. After some years, he moved and lived in an old mill in the mountains outside the Old Cairo. He was chosen abbot of St. Samuel Monastery.

In Old Cairo he built St. Mena Monastery and lived there until he was chosen Pope of the seat of St. Mark in April 1959. He lived a life of prayer, asceticism and humility. God bestowed upon him the powers of healing and exorcism of evil spirits. Thousands and thousands of people speak of his many miracles that touched the lives of all the people who sought him during his life or called on his name after his death. During his papacy, the Holy St. Mary appeared continuously for a whole year on the dome of the church of her name, El-Zaytoun, suburb of Cairo. Also the remnants of the body of St. Mark the Evangelist were brought from Venice, Italy in 1967, and the Cathedral built in Cairo.

He departed in 1971 and his body is now kept in St. Mena Monastery in the desert near Alexandria which he rebuilt on the remnants of the site where the monastery of the great Saint used to flourish in the 4th century.

May the blessings and prayer of Abba Kyrillos VI be with us all. Glory, majesty, dominion and authority are to the only God, our Saviour Jesus Christ, now and at all times and forever and ever. Amen.

The Coptic Church and Its World Position

After one year of the enthronement of Pope Kyrillos, church heads in Egypt and all over the world became fully aware of the important role of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt as an authentic Apostolic Church. The Coptic Church resumed its world position among the majority of Christian denominations in various countries of the world.

His Grace Elias Zoghby of the Roman Catholic Church said about Pope Kyrillos VI, "The most prominent characteristic of Pope Kyrillos is that he trusts in God and believes in the power of prayers and depends on God's grace, not on human means which many times fail."

It happened for the first time in the history of the Diplomatic Corps that twenty-two foreign representatives gathered together to visit the Pope of Alexandria. They all came together seeking the blessings of Pope Kyrillos; they were headed by the U.S. representative and among them were the Ambassador to the Vatican and the Russian

Consul general.

Pope Kyrillos headed the historic conference for the leaders of Orthodox churches in 1965. The meeting brought these sister churches closer together through the discussion of important matters pertaining to their church services.

During his reign as Pope, Pope Kyrillos received a large number of heads of Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches who were very pleased to meet with him.

The Coptic church took a leading position in the World Council of Churches. Likewise the Coptic church took an active role in the Christian Council for Peace, International Union for the Holy Bible Societies, International Union for Christian Students, International Organization for Christian Broadcasting, International Council for Christian Education, African Church Council, Middle East Theological Seminaries Association and many others. Delegates from the Coptic church attended international church conferences and the Coptic church was well-represented at all levels.

The church paid special attention to the Copts abroad. Pope Kyrillos sent priests to a number of countries in Europe to serve the Coptic families there. Pope Kyrillos helped the Copts in Kuwait, Canada, Australia and the United States build their own churches. He sent priests to serve these communities.

Holy Chrism

During the Week of Passion (April) 1967, Pope Kyrillos held special prayers for the consecration of the Holy Chrism used in the Coptic church for the anointment of the believers after Baptism. This is referred to as the sacrament of chrismation.

The consecration of the Holy Chrism is a rare ceremony. Church history records only twenty-five such consecrations before the time of Pope Kyrillos.

The Construction on the New Cathedral

The church officially celebrated the laying of the cornerstone of the largest cathedral in the Middle East carrying the name of St. Mark the Apostle. On the eve of May 8, 1967 (the Feast of Martyrdom of St. Mark), Pope Kyrillos held prayers for the blessing of the site of the New Cathedral.

On June 25, 1968, Pope Kyrillos headed the official opening ceremony of the New Cathedral which was attended by heads of States and representatives of the various churches from all over the world reaching 172 guests in number. The following day mass was celebrated on the golden altar that was presented by the Russian church. Bishops from the Eastern Orthodox church also participated in the celebration of the mass and it was attended by delegates from all over the world and several thousand worshippers from the Coptic church. At the end of the mass people moved solemnly towards the body of St. Mark (returned to Egypt from Rome on June 24, 1968) to seek the blessings of this great saint.

The Apparition of St. Mary

It happened that on Tuesday April 2, 1968 at 8:30pm, Mr. Abdel-Aziz Aly, a guard for the General Transportation Organization across the street from the church saw a young girl clothed in white walking over the dome and bowing down in worship in front

of the cross. He contacted the police thinking that she wanted to commit suicide. The passers-by gathered around the church and saw the young girl clearly on top of the dome, her body well-lit; she was holding the branch of an olive tree and was surrounded by a flock of white doves. A halo of light encircled her. The priest of the church, Father Qustantin Musa, came immediately to the place and told the people that this was St. Mary, the mother of God. The news was rushed to Pope Kyrillos; and the transfiguration was repeated night after night. It was seen by thousands of Christians and non-Christians alike.

The transfiguration was accompanied by miracles of healing of incurable diseases that are recorded in writing by the medical doctors who were treating the patients before the miraculous healing. The miracles are also recorded by the people themselves in all honesty and in recognition of the grace and kindness of the Virgin Mary to them.

Pope Kyrillos issued a Papal declaration about this apparition on May 4, 1964 in a press conference held at the Pope's residence which was well-attended by representatives of local and international media. This transfiguration was very important to the church. It brought about a revival of the faith in God and His saints and it made people look at St. Mary as their intercessor. It brought many people back to their church and led to the conversion of many others.

The Return of the Body of St. Mark the Apostle

The Lord crowned the days of Pope Kyrillos with a crown of blessing and joy by the return of the holy body of St. Mark the Apostle who first preached the Word of God among the Egyptians around the year 43 A.D.

It happened during a meeting between Pope Kyrillos and the Roman Catholic Delegate that Pope Kyrillos said, 'Isn't it right time you return to us the body of St. Mark the Apostle?' The Apostolic Delegate replied, 'We cannot refuse a request from Pope Kyrillos.' Pope Kyrillos immediately sent a letter to Pope Paul in Rome asking for the return of the holy body of St. Mark. Pope Paul welcomed the request and sent a message to the Bishop of Venice where the holy body was kept. The Bishop of Venice at first refused.

St. Mark was martyred in Alexandria on May 8, 68 A.D. and the believers buried him in the Church of Baucalis in Alexandria. In 827 A.D. some merchants, because of their deep veneration for the Great Saint, took the holy body to their own church in Venice. Now in 1968, the Bishop of Venice agreed to return the body of St. Mark to the Coptic Church.

Pope Kyrillos sent a delegation of seventy-five persons: bishops, monks, priests, deacons and church members, as well as representatives of the Ethiopian church, to board a charter flight to Venice. The Coptic delegates received the body of St. Mark in an official celebration on the 22nd of June, 1968. The Coptic delegates returned to Cairo International Airport on the 24th of June, 1968, where over a hundred thousand church members had been waiting for hours. In the forefront were Pope Kyrillos, the foreign representatives and the religious delegates. When the plane landed at 11:30pm, a white dove appeared in the dark. The dove was seen clearly by all present who chanted glorifying the Lord of hosts.