



The Episcopal / Anglican Diocese of Egypt with North Africa and the Horn of Africa

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Pope Shenouda III, the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, has Passed Away

Together with all Egyptians, the Episcopal / Anglican Church of Egypt mourns the loss of Pope Shenouda III, the Pope of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Pope Shenouda passed away yesterday (Saturday 17 March) at the age of 89 and 41 years after his enthronement as the 117th Patriarch of Alexandria. Pope Shenouda was a great example of a Bishop who is committed to teaching his people regularly. Every Wednesday for the last 41 years, he met with his people (between 5000 and 6000 each week) to answer their questions and teach from the Bible. He wrote many books, which were translated into several languages.

Pope Shenouda had a great missionary vision. He consecrated two missionary bishops in Africa, and he planted churches and monasteries in all of the continents of the world. He gave special care to all of the Copts in the diaspora. Pope Shenouda had a warm heart for ministry to the poor. He had a special meeting with them every Thursday, where he supported them through funds, counselling and prayer.

During the time of Pope Shenouda, the Coptic Orthodox church has grown tremendously. He gave special attention to theological education, opening several new seminaries. He also cared for the youth of his church and consecrated two bishops mainly for ministry to youth.

He was well known for defending the rights of Christians, and because of this he was put under house arrest by President Anwar Sadat. He was released after the death of Sadat. In spite of this he continued to love Egypt and often said, 'Egypt is not the country in which we live but the country which lives in our hearts.'

As Egypt presently goes through many political changes, it is not easy for Egyptian Christians to lose Pope Shenouda, the father of the church in Egypt, at this time of uncertainty about the future. I was not surprised to see hundreds of thousands of people in the streets of Cairo yesterday, immediately after the announcement of the passing away of the beloved Pope, who was such an important symbol for the nation.

Our relationship to the Coptic Orthodox Church is the strongest among the different denominations in Egypt. Several times he mentioned to me how much he appreciated the fact that he started his career as a teacher of English in our Anglican School in Cairo.

Pope Shenouda was a continuous encouragement to me personally and to our church. He always sent representatives to our events and celebrations. At our nomination he received an honorary doctoral degree at a great celebration from Nashotah House in Wisconsin, USA. Pope Shenouda will be greatly missed, but he will always be remembered as a great leader, teacher, partner and bishop.

In our churches we have prayed for the Coptic Orthodox Church and we have thanked God for Pope Shenouda, his life and his ministry in the assurance that he now celebrates eternal life with his Lord Christ. During his life he often told audiences ‘rabbina mawguud’, God is present in our midst. He now experiences this to the fullest possible extent!

The funeral for Pope Shenouda will be on Tuesday 21 March, and he will be buried in his monastery of St. Bishoy.