

The secret behind the power in the life of our father, the beloved Abouna Bishoy Kamel

We all know how active Father Bishoy was, and how great his deeds were in his constant struggle in numerous areas. I would like to record here, to the best of my ability, the depth of his life, as seen through his deeds and words throughout his life.

1. His belief in his mission:

Since his early youth, he fully believed that it was impossible for him to have any other goal in life other than finding the stray souls and bringing them to a life of fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. After graduation, he became a very successful teacher; although one day, he asked one of his fellow servants: "Can't any of you pay me the government's salary so I can quit my job and work as a full-time servant?!"

His was never concerned about work or money; he simply believed that he should live to serve.

After becoming a priest, he continued in his mission. The following example illustrates my point:

+ Despite his unique managerial capabilities, he chose to leave the church's finances in the hands of its council and the patriarchate, with no desire to know anything about the church's bank account. He believed that his time was more precious than to spend it doing anything other than spiritual work. This is probably the secret behind the strength of St. George's Church of Sporting, Alexandria, and the secret behind the great respect with which it is regarded by the council and the patriarchate: the church's pastor sowed the seeds and lived with them a life of love which exceeded all considerations.

In all honesty, I can say that Father Bishoy succeeded in letting go of all material things matters through his total lack of preoccupation with them. The Lord's blessings thus filled his life, and many churches were built at his hands, such as St. George's Church, Hadara, the Archangel Michael's Church, Mustafa Kamel, Amba Tekla Himanout's Church, Ibrahimeyya, St. Peter's Church, (District of Bishr), St. Mary's and St. Cyril's Church, Cleopatra, and others.

2. His love for the Cross:

He loved the Cross; this was revealed in his meditations on the wounds of the Crucified. He frequently asked his confessors to meditate, daily, on the life-giving wounds of Christ. This drove him to write his book "At the Foot of the Cross," and to place, above his bed, the image of the Cross with St. Mary Magdalene bowing down at its foot.

On his deathbed, one of the doctors asked him jokingly, "What is it that you like about this picture?" He responded after a while, "What can I say - Mary chose the best place on earth!"

3. His preoccupation with eternal life:

Many years ago, I met someone who was fully opposed to Father Bishoy. He raved and ranted, uttering much against him. I took him aside, waited till his anger subsided, then asked him: "Don't you think you have sinned against our father?" Upon his answering "yes", I said, "Then you must apologize to him." I then went to Father Bishoy and told him, "So-and-so felt very badly towards you and now wishes to apologize to you." So he said, "I will go to him." True to his word, we visited that person, and he was quite ashamed of himself when our father embraced him.

You can get a feel for the extent to which Abouna Bishoy was preoccupied with eternal life, by observing him throughout his service, and by noticing the care he awarded his spiritual growth. After he had spent ten months in Los Angeles, I went there to take over the service from him; he then told me, "The Lord has sent you, because I felt as though in a drought - I need to return to Egypt to live in a spiritual atmosphere." These words always reproached me throughout my service in the States and Australia; my inclination was always to return - not to escape responsibility, rather, to ensure the continued quest for eternal life for me and for those I serve.

His preoccupation with eternal life was also evident when he talked with us, the church's priests. Here is an example. In one of our meetings, we lost track of our discussion somewhat from our spiritual discussions and started judging others. He immediately told me and to Father Luka, "Let us train ourselves such that if any of us spoke of someone away from our spiritual life, the other should stop him saying that he had no interest in listening."

Our clerical meetings always included self-criticism, with regards to our weaknesses in our service.

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