

ARCHDEACON: HABIB GUIRGUIS

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**THE
FATHERS
OF THE
CHURCH**
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ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA
 FESTAL LETTERS I-11
 Translated by Philip R. Amidon, S.J.
 Edited with an introduction by John J. O'Keefe

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE COPTIC CHURCH IN THE TIME OF HABIB GUIRGUIS:



- Very little is known about Habib Guirguis in western civilisation.
- He was a very important figure in our church in the first half of the 20th Century
- The era in which Habib Guirguis was born, was considered a period of Darkness for the Coptic Church. (Pope Quote)
- There was a lot of tension at the time for the Coptic Church both internally and externally

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE COPTIC CHURCH IN THE TIME OF HABIB GUIRGUIS:



- **Internal tension:**
Existed between the Church hierarchy and laity
- **External tension**
(caused by):
 - Western 'Proselytism' Missionaries
 - Islam
 - Muslim Governments interfered with the running of the church's affairs

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE COPTIC CHURCH IN THE TIME OF HABIB GUIRGUIS:



The renaissance of the church is due to four important developments:

- 1.The establishment of the Coptic Theological College.
2. Fighting for the Church's Identity
- 3.The Coptic Sunday School movement.
- 4.The founding of Coptic Benevolent Societies

ARCHDEACON HABIB GUIRGUIS WAS A VISIONARY AND AN EDUCATIONAL PIONEER, LEADING THE RENAISSANCE OF THE COPTIC CHURCH AFTER LONG YEARS OF DARKNESS!!

Life of Archdeacon Habib Guirguis

DEVELOPMENT 1: The establishment and growth of the Coptic Theological College.



- Born in Cairo, Egypt, in 1876.
- His father died when he was 4 yrs old and his mother took care of him, and raised him with a strong love for the Lord Christ and the Coptic Church.
- He joined the “Great Coptic School” established by Pope Kyrollos IV (‘the father of Reform’)
- In 1893, he was appointed a deacon and was chosen to be the Pope’s personal deacon/disciple.
- Pope Kyrollos IV thought of establishing a theological college which would provide the opportunity for learning. Habib at the age of 17 at the time, was one of only 12 students to enrol at the college

Life of Archdeacon Habib Guirguis



- The establishment of such a institution required funding and The Pope chose his bright young disciple, Habib, to tour the country and obtain donations from all the churches.
- He travelled the land, visiting church after church, preaching and enthusing the people about building the theological college, until he returned with considerable funding donation from which the buildings were bought for the college
- Because of his exceptional aptitude and due to the lack of eligible teachers, Habib was asked by the Pope to teach while in his final year at college.

Life of Archdeacon Habib Guirguis



- That very year Habib Guirguis started serving the church on two fronts: as a teacher in the Theological college and as a travelling lay preacher
- He immediately went to the library of the Patriarchate and educated himself reading every single resource, book or manuscript contained in the library to better educate himself on theology.
- He worked without ceasing to rebuild the Clerical School by expanding the subjects and adding new subjects to match the modern colleges of Theology.
- Due to his tireless efforts, the Pope ordained him an Archdeacon, and he was also appointed by the Pope, the Dean of the college after the former dean passed away.

Life of Archdeacon Habib Guirguis



- He worked hard to establish evening lectures and night school to cater for university graduates who would be serving in the church.
- He also fought hard to get the college recognised by the Egyptian Gov't as a college of higher education
- The college attracted many bright graduates including Nazeer Gayed whom we now know as his holiness "Pope Shenouda 3rd "
- Further to this, he recommended any priest must attend and obtain a graduate diploma from the college. The Holy Synod met and decided this to be a prerequisite for any priest to be ordained in 1937.

Life of Archdeacon Habib Guirguis

DEVELOPMENT 2: FIGHTING FOR THE CHURCH'S IDENTITY

- The era in which Habib Guirguis lived the Coptic Church was faced with many threats surrounding the church.
- Additionally the arrival of Western Evangelistic Missionary's arrived in Egypt and set up missionary Churches for Protestants and Catholic preaching with the primary aim of converting all around the world with their western beliefs and ways.
- They enticed Copt's especially those in poorer regions of Egypt, with lower education and money, that if they joined their modern church which they said was not a betrayal of their religion, they would enjoy the lifestyle the Europeans and Americans enjoyed and their basic necessities would always be covered,



Life of Archdeacon Habib

Guirguis



- To counteract the effect of foreign evangelism, Pope Kirolos embarked on a torturous pastoral tour in 1904 around Egypt to meet his people and increase their bond of love to the church and its orthodox faith. He was accompanied by 3 metropolitans and he took Habib Guirguis who acted as his spokesman throughout the tour, giving famous series of talks in the churches they visited.
- His lectures were very inspirational, he spoke about how our fathers the apostles and martyrs presented the deposit of faith in (with their blood and suffering), so we may receive it intact and without blemish and so it is our duty to also protect it for our children.
- He also reminded them about St Pauls letter to the Galations warniing them against the many false heretics and strage doctrine. He also explained the clear differences between Catholics, Protestants and the Coptic Church.

Life of Archdeacon Habib Guirguis

STAGE 3: THE SUNDAY SCHOOL MOVEMENT



- After a few years of preaching, Habib Guirguis realised that a foundation has to be firstly laid with the children & that future generations of the church had to be taught from an early age so the Orthodox values would form into one's life & personality.
- In 1900, he founded the first Coptic Sunday School Movement when he was just 24 yrs of age. He started by teaching the children in churches and halls in Cairo, and the numbers of children increased and spread all over Egypt.
- In 1918, he established the central committee of Sunday School to oversee the expansion of the movement and set the curriculum for the different stages
- By 1941, Sunday school was so popular and large that a conference was held for Cairo's Sunday School Servants. Many Activities sprang from Sunday School movement such as retreats

Life of Archdeacon Habib Guirguis

STAGE 3: THE SUNDAY SCHOOL MOVEMENT

- He wrote the lessons for the classes and printed pictures for those lessons
- He wrote many hymns for the children of Sunday School and also for the whole Church to fill the need of the Church in this area
- By 1941, Sunday school was so popular and large that a conference was held for Cairo's Sunday School Servants. Many Activities sprang from Sunday School movement such as retreats, conferences, seminars and publications which planted the seed for our foundations in Australia and Coptic Churches around the world today.



Life of Archdeacon Habib Guirguis

+ Sunday School which was a tiny seed planted and watered by such a man of strong faith, and grew by the Almighty till it became a great tree giving fruit and shelter to countless many.

Today we are all lucky enough to grow up in Sunday school from a very early age!

+ Further to this Habib Guirguis established many Coptic Christian Societies who were responsible for the establishment of the great majority of newer churches, Coptic schools, hospitals, orphanages, and publishing houses, spreading education and social welfare to all Egyptians without discrimination.



SUMMARY

Archdeacon Habib Guirguis was a visionary and an educational pioneer, leading the renaissance of the Coptic Church after long years of darkness.

He shared a vision to solve the problem of this darkness for the church. He analysed the situation and came to practical solutions. he had very clear goals including:

- educating the leaders through the theological school
- teaching the new generation through sunday school classes and pressed hard to introduce religious education in public schools
- spread the word of god to the whole congregation through sermons in the churches and through christian associations

Habib Guirguis was an example of a true Christian by his behaviour and strong trust and faith in God to solve difficult situations he faced from as early as a teenager



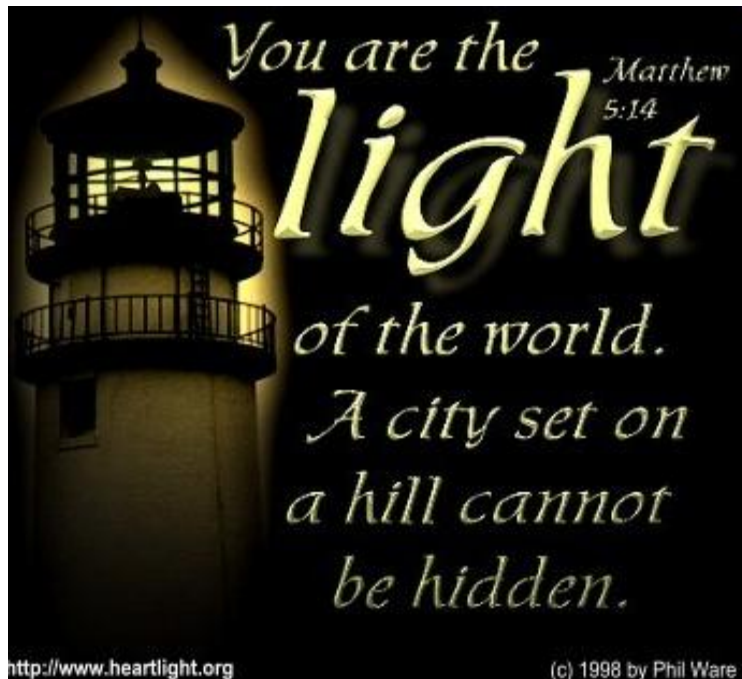
I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED THE RACE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH. NOW THERE IS IN STORE FOR ME THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, WILL AWARD TO ME ON THAT DAY... 2 TIMOTHY 4:7-8



Key Verses:

- 1 "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing"

(2 Tim 4:7:8)



- 2 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and Glorify your Father In heaven

(Matthew 5:14-16)