

ABBA THOMAS THE HERMIT

Abba Wissa, the disciple of Abba Shenouda the Archimandrite once said : There lived on the mountain of Shenshif a saintly hermit father called Thomas. He was greatly loved by everyone, and he was a dear friend of my spiritual father. Abba Shenouda used to tell me that there was no other like Abba Thomas in spirituality, and that the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to him, and the angels frequently visited him. When the hour approached for his departure from this world, he hurried to our wilderness to meet with my father, and together they sat down speaking about the many glories and wonders of God. Abba Thomas said to my father Abba Shenouda: "I shall no longer speak with you in the flesh, for the angel of the Lord has revealed to me this night that my Lord will shortly come to take me with Him. The angel also revealed to me the day of your departure father, so your sons must take note of this day; for it will be on the same day as Alexandria's Archbishop Abba Kyrilos was born, and also the same hour of Abba Boctor's birth, the abbot of Tebansin Monastery. It will be the 7th day of the blessed month of Abib, and many saints will come to you on this day." My father Abba Shenouda then asked Abba Thomas the hermit, "Father, how will I know the hour of your departure?" to which Abba Thomas replied, "I will give you a sign; the rock on which you sit upon at the entrance of your cave will crack open into two halves, just like an open book. When you see this, then know that my soul has been released from my body. You will see the Archangel Rafael walking before you, together with those whom you choose to accompany you for my burial, and you will reach my dwelling place without any transportation. So I ask you Abba Shenouda to do this act of love for the sake of God, and bury my body, for I have no one but God alone." My father answered, "let it be according to God's will." They embraced each other for the last time and then the saintly father said to Abba Shenouda, "I will leave you now in the tender care of God, until I meet you again." My father then returned to his cave and daily, he increased in worship and ascetism. It was three months since my father had spoken with Abba Thomas, and as he stood at the entrance of his cave one morning to pray, he saw the rock before him crack in half; just like an open book. My father sighed deeply and said, "The wilderness of Shenshif had lost its lamp." As he spoke these words, the Archangel Rafael appeared and pointed to Abba Shenouda with his right hand saying, "Hail to you beloved of the Lord, and of all the saints! Come, let us bury the body of the pure saint Thomas, because they are all waiting for you." My father followed the angel until they arrived at the monastery by nightfall. There Abba Shenouda found a brother praying, "At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You because of Your righteous judgements" (Ps119:62), so my father approached him and said, "Follow me." He then went to Abba Yousab the writer who was praying, "We will rejoice in Your salvation and in the name of our God we will set up our banners" (Ps20:5), so my father said to him, "Follow me." They approached the strong and courageous Brother Enoch who was praying, "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler" (Ps91:4), and my father said to him, "Follow me." The four of them went into the sanctuary to pray, before leaving the monastery; guided by the Archangel Rafael who walked before them. Finally they reached the saintly father Abba Thomas' dwelling place, and when they found his body, they fervently prayed on him, wrapped him in cloth and reverently placed him within his cave. Many miracles were performed through him. The saintly hermit father Abba

Thomas rested in peace on the 27th day of the blessed month Bashans, in the year 452AD, and his prophecy about the departure of Abba Shenouda the Archimandrite on the 7th of Abib was fulfilled." To this day, there is a church which bears the name of the holy saint Abba Thomas the hermit, which is located about five kilometres north of El Sawamaa, north-east of Akhmeem. There is also a monastery in this place which also bears his name. May his prayers and blessings be with us all, amen.