

The Coptic Liturgy

The Holy Family and An altar to the Lord in Egypt

العائلة المقدسة ومذبح للرب في مصر

Fr. Jacob Nadian
St. Bishoy Coptic Orthodox Church



The Coptic Liturgy



***“An altar to the Lord in the midst of
the land of Egypt” (Isaiah 19: 19)***

***How it was fulfilled by the visit of
The Holy Family to Egypt?***



First: Who are the “Copts”?

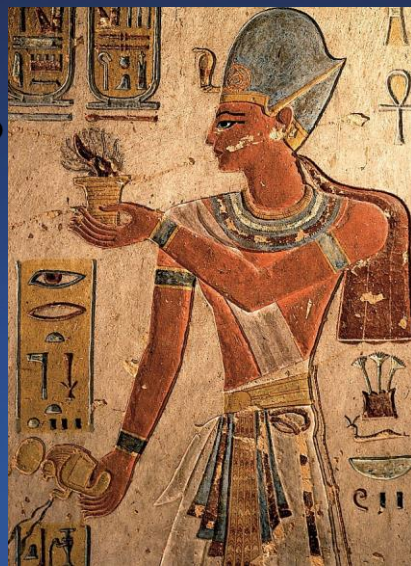


The term “Copts” is equivalent to the word “Egyptians”. It is derived from the Greek “Aigypptos”, which in turns is derived from the ancient Egyptian “Ha-ka-Ptah”, i.e. “the house of the spirit of Ptah”, a most highly revered deity in Egyptian mythology.

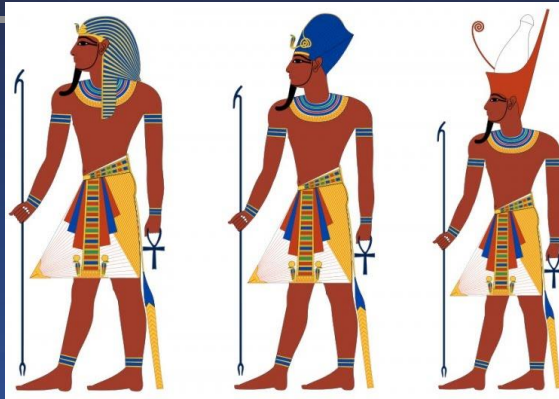
Sons of Pharaohs

From the Arab conquest and until today, this term refers to the Christian Egyptians to distinguish them from the native Muslims.

The Copts as the successors of the ancient Egyptians are defined as the modern sons of the Pharaohs.



Sons of Pharaohs



They played an essential role in the whole Christian world, especially during the first five centuries.

Their religious background helped them to accept Christianity with eagerness and to enjoy its depth through their ascetic life, meditation and studying of the Holy Scripture.

See of St. Mark

- ◆ The Coptic Church or the Church of Alexandria is called "See of St. Mark"; one of the earliest four sees: Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Rome.
- ◆ Although St. Mark founded the Coptic Church, evidence indicates that Christianity was introduced into Egypt before St. Mark, though undoubtedly; it must have been on a very small scale.





See of St. Mark

The following are some interesting points on this subject:

- ◆ The Coptic book of Synxarium (the 15th day of Bashans) records the preaching of Simon the Zealot in areas of south Egypt and Nubia.
- ◆ St. Luke addresses his Gospel to “most excellent Theophilus”, a Christian believer from Alexandria.
- ◆ The Book of Acts refers to the Jews of Egypt who were present at the Pentecost (**Acts 2:10**). Upon their return home, they must have conveyed what they saw and heard about Christ to their relatives.



See of St. Mark

The following are some interesting points on this subject:

- ◆ The Book of Acts mentions an “Alexandrian Jew named Apollos” who arrived at Ephesus... He was described as an eloquent man with sound knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.
- ◆ He preached with great spiritual earnestness and was able to demonstrate from the Scriptures that Jesus was the expected Christ (**Acts 18:24-28**).
- ◆ It is quite possible that Apollos was a member of a small Christian group of Jewish origin who lived in Alexandria.

St. Mark the Founder

- ◆ The Copts are proud of the apostolicity of their church, whose founder is St. Mark, one of the seventy Apostles (**Mark 10:10**), and one of the four Evangelists.
- ◆ He is regarded by the Coptic hierarchy as the first of their unbroken 118 patriarchs, and also the first of a stream of Egyptian martyrs.
- ◆ This apostolicity was not only furnished on grounds of its foundation but rather by the persistence of the church in observing the same faith received by the Apostle and his successors, the Holy Fathers.



St. Mark's Bibliography

- ◆ St. Mark was an African native of Jewish parents who belonged to the Levites' tribe.
- ◆ His family lived in Cyrenaica until they were attacked by some barbarians, and lost their property.
- ◆ Consequently, they moved to Jerusalem with their child John Mark (**Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37**).
- ◆ Apparently, he was given a good education and became conversant in both Greek and Latin in addition to Hebrew.



St. Mark's Bibliography

- ◆ His family was highly religious and in close relationship with the Lord Jesus. His cousin was St. Barnabas and his father's cousin was St. Peter.
- ◆ His mother, Mary, played an important part in the early days of the church in Jerusalem. Her upper room became the first Christian church in the world where the Lord Himself instituted the Holy Eucharist (**Mark 14:12-26**).
- ◆ There also, the Lord appeared to the disciples after His resurrection and His Holy Spirit came upon them.



St. Mark's Bibliography

- ◆ Young Mark was always associated with the Lord, who chose him as one of the seventy disciples.
- ◆ He is mentioned in the Scriptures in a number of events related with the Lord: He was present at the wedding of Cana of Galilee, and was the man who had been carrying the jar when the two disciples went to prepare a place for the celebration of the Pasch (**Mark 14:13, 14; Luke 22:11**). He was also the same man who fled naked before the Crucifixion (**Mark 14:51, 52**).
- ◆ Accordingly, the church insists on calling St. Mark "Theorimos", i.e. the beholder of God, in order to prevent counterfeits of some historians.



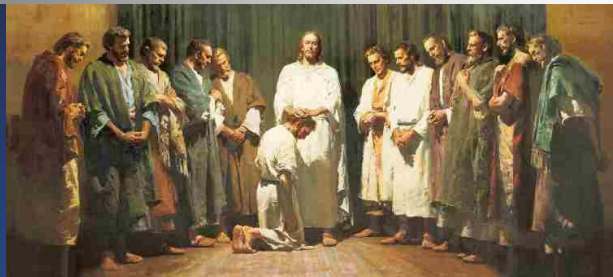
St. Mark and the Lion

The lion is the symbol of St. Mark for two reasons:

- ◆ He begins his Gospel by describing John the Baptist as a lion roaring in the desert (**Mark 1:3**).
- ◆ His famous story with the lion, as related to us by Severus Ibn-El-Mokafa: Once a lion and lioness appeared to John Mark and his father Arostalis while they were traveling in Jordan. The father was very frightened and begged his son to escape, while he awaited his fate. John Mark assured his father that Jesus Christ would save them, and began to pray. The two beasts fell dead and as a result of this miracle, the father believed in Christ, and died shortly thereafter.



Preaching With the Apostles



- ◆ At first, St. Mark accompanied St. Peter on his missionary journeys inside Jerusalem and Judea.
- ◆ Then he accompanied St. Paul and St. Barnabas on their first missionary journey to Antioch, Cyprus and Asia Minor, but for some reason or another he left them and returned home (**Acts 13:13**).
- ◆ On their second trip, St. Paul refused to take him along because he left them on the previous mission; for this reason St. Barnabas was separated from St. Paul and went to Cyprus with his cousin Mark (**Acts 15:36-41**).
- ◆ Afterwards, St. Paul needed St. Mark with him and they both preached in Colossi (**Colossi 4:11**), Rome (**Philippians 24**; **2 Timothy 4: 11**) and perhaps at Venice.

St. Mark's Preaching In Africa

- ◆ St. Mark's real labor lays in Africa. He left Rome to Pentapolis, where he was born.
- ◆ After planting the seeds of faith and performing many miracles he traveled to Egypt, through the Oasis, the desert of Libya, Upper Egypt, and then entered Alexandria.
- ◆ Some sources put his entry in Egypt as early as 48 AD. Others put it in 55, 58 and even as late as 61 AD.
- ◆ However, the consensus of opinion puts the date of his martyrdom in Alexandria in 68 AD.



St. Mark's Preaching In Egypt

- ◆ On his arrival, the strap of his sandal was out loose.
- ◆ He went to a cobbler to mend it. When the cobbler- Ananias - took an awl to work on it, he accidentally pierced his hand and cried aloud: "O One God".
- ◆ At this utterance, St. Mark rejoiced and after miraculously healing the man's wound, took courage and began to preach to the hungry ears of his first convert.
- ◆ The spark was ignited and Ananias took the Apostle home, with him. He and his family were baptized, and many others followed.



The Coptic Church & the Apostolic Thought

- ◆ The Coptic Orthodox Church is an Apostolic Church,
 - not only because her founder is St. Mark the Apostle who ministered in Egypt, ordained a bishop (Ananias), priests and deacons to aid him in his ministry and was martyred in Alexandria,
 - and not only because her first Patriarch is St. Mark's successor through an unbroken chain of popes since the apostolic age,
 - but also because she preserves the apostolic thought in her life, spirituality, liturgies and dogmas.
- ◆ She is actually a living extension of the apostolic church without deviation.



The Coptic Liturgy



The Holy Family in Egypt





Out of Egypt I called my Son (Hosea 11: 1)



The Holy Family in Egypt





The Vision

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying, "Arise take the young child and His mother, and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him" (Matthew 2:13)



Sources of Information

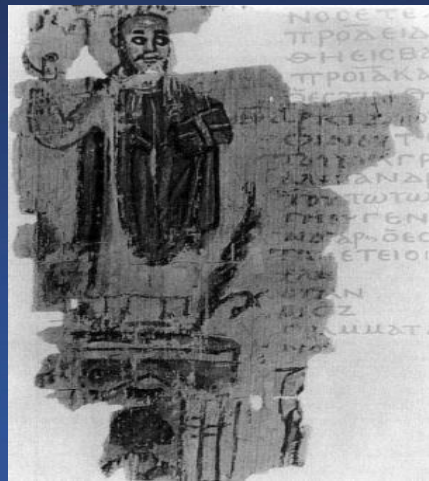
- ◆ The only country visited by the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 2:13-21).
- ◆ It is recorded that the idols fell in the towns visited by the Lord and the Holy Family.
- ◆ St. Cyril the Great interpreted Isaiah's prophecy saying: "The glittering cloud, which carried the child Jesus to Egypt was His mother, St. Mary, who surpassed the cloud in purity. The altar which was established in the midst of the land of Egypt is the Christian church, which had replaced the temples of paganism as the idols collapsed and the temples were deserted in the presence of the Lord Jesus."

Sources of Information

- ◆ The tortuous trails they followed within Egypt, are chronicled by Pope Theophilus, 23rd Patriarch of Alexandria (384-412 AD).
- ◆ He prayed to build a great cathedral to replace the small church; in a vision, the Holy Virgin explained that it was the will of her Son that the church should be kept as it is, as a symbol of Christ's humility.
- ◆ Before consecrating this altar, she told him that the Lord, the Virgin Mary and the Disciples came together upon a cloud to the small church to bless and dedicate it.

Sources of Information

He testifies, in his celebrated letters that on the eve of Hator 6th (November), after long prayer, the Holy Virgin related the details of the Holy Family's journey to, in, and from Egypt, and bade him record what he had seen and heard.





Sources of Information

- ◆ The early local tradition is another source of the flight information.
- ◆ The flight of the Holy Family in Egypt is also found in the writings of Hippolytus of Rome (was a theologian, a Biblical commentator during the early 3rd century, and active church leader).
- ◆ He refers to the stay period of the Holy Family in Egypt for 3 years and 6 months.
- ◆ He may have received the early local traditions within the Christian church in Egypt just over a mere 200 years after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.



Sources of Information

- ◆ Another source is a work composed by Sozomen, the Christian historian in the middle of the 5th century, covering events during the years 325 to 425, providing more information about local sites in Hermopolis.
- ◆ In chapter five, he records "At Hermopolis, in the Thebaid, is a tree called Persis of which the branches, the leaves and the least portion of the bark are said to heal diseases, when touched by the sick; for it is related by the Egyptians that when Joseph fled with Christ and Mary, the holy mother of God, from the wrath of Herod, they went to Hermopolis; when entering at the gate, this largest tree, as if not enduring the advent of Christ, inclined to the ground and worshiped him."

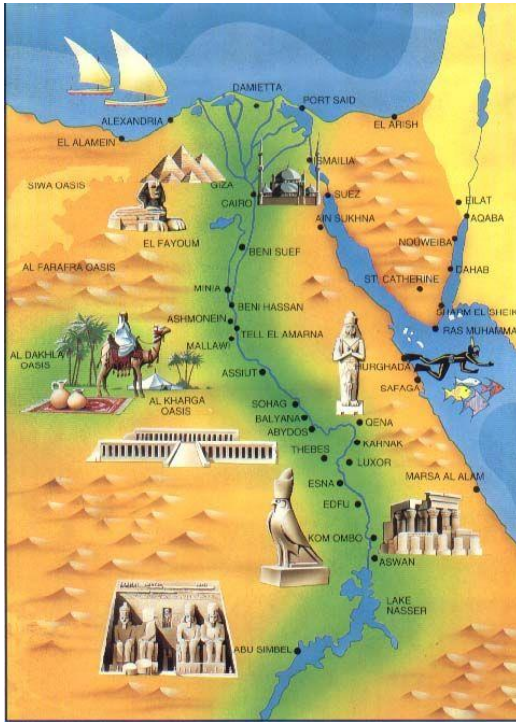
Sources of Information

- ◆ Other sources of information include accounts by 2nd and 3rd century Greek and Jewish writers, philosophers, and historians.
- ◆ Many churches and monasteries were built in the locations, which have been blessed by the visit “Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day and will make sacrifice and offering” (Isaiah 19:21).
- ◆ Many miracles took place in these locations during the Holy Family visit more than 2000 years ago (and continue to occur to this day).
- ◆ Among the places visited by the Holy Family is Zeitoun in Cairo, where the Holy Virgin Mary appeared in 1968 .

Anno Domini

In her book “The Story of the Church of Egypt” (1897), E. L. Butcher wrote:

IN a certain gallery in London there is a celebrated picture, which most of us have seen, called Anno Domini. It represents a not uncommon scene in the Egypt of that year, a gorgeous procession of the Egyptian gods. The singers go before, the minstrels follow after; in the midst are the damsels playing on the timbrels; and in the place of supremest honour is borne the goddess, Isis, with Horus upon her knee. The sick are brought by their friends to the wayside to receive strength and healing as the gods pass. Little images of them are sold as charms to ward off evil from the purchaser. But in the centre of the canvas a very humble cavalcade meets and makes way for the grand procession of the gods: a tired donkey bearing a woman and child, while the peasant husband trudges alongside. Those ancient gods are lost and forgotten, their temples are lonely ruins; but that child's name is honoured now in every quarter of the globe: Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.



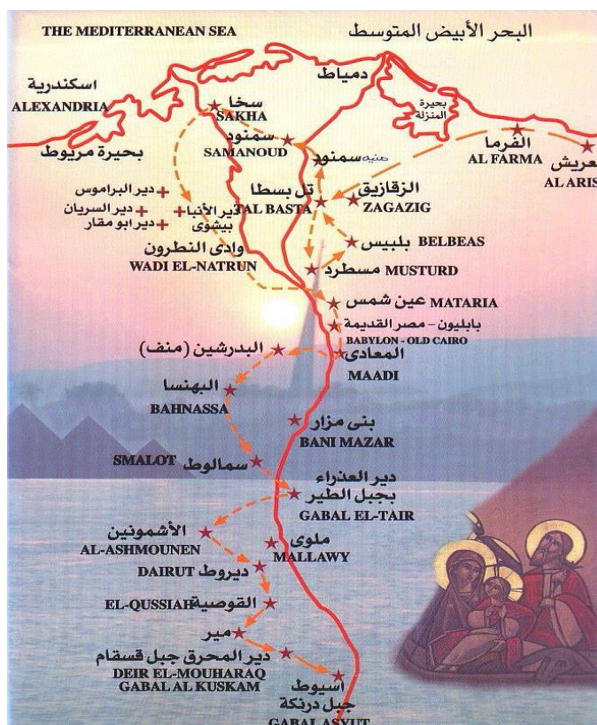
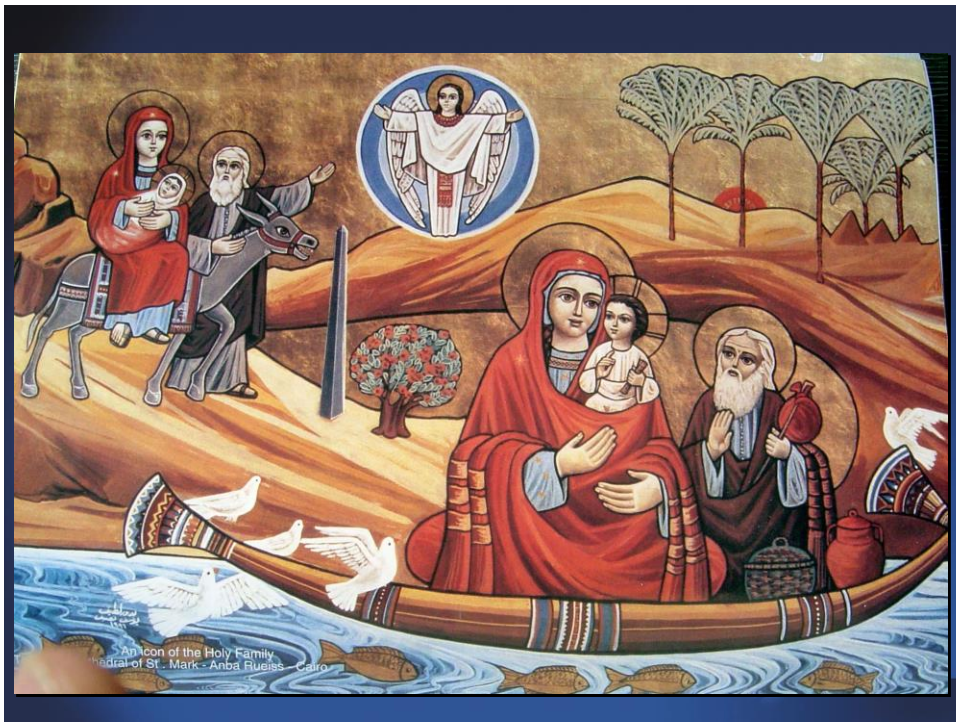
The Journey



The Journey

On the 24th day of the Coptic month of Bashans, which corresponds to the 1st of June, the Coptic Church celebrates the entry of the Lord Jesus Christ into the land of Egypt.





Arish

According to the sources of the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Holy Family proceeded from Bethlehem to Gaza and from there to El-Zaraniq 37 km, west of El-Arish.

El Arish



Tel-Basta

- Lord Jesus caused a spring of water to well up from the ground.
- His presence caused the idols to crumble.
- In consequence, the town people became aggressive, and the Holy Family left for Mostorod.

Tel-Basta



Tel Basta

A well the Holy Family drank from.



Mostorod



Mostorod is 10 km from Cairo, called Mahamma (meaning bathing place). There the Virgin Mary bathed the Lord Jesus Christ and washed His cloth.

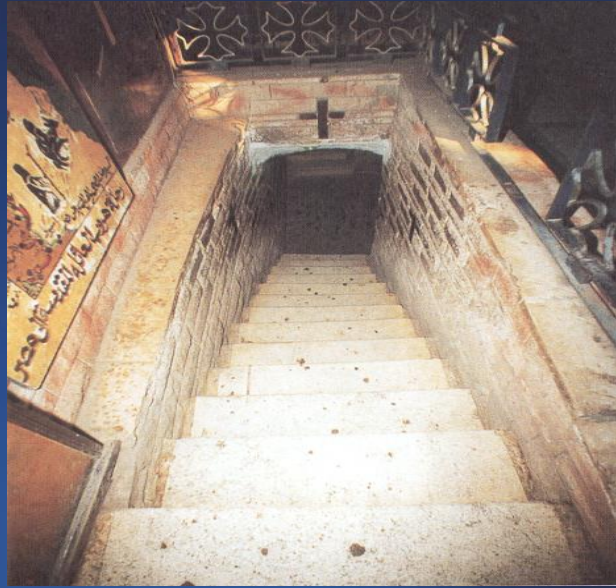
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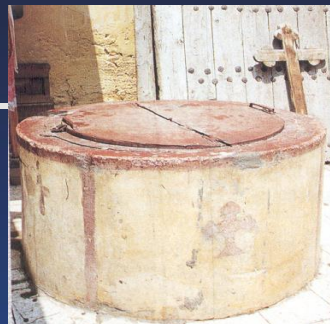
Mostorod

The well where the Holy family drank water is still there until today, there is a church for the Virgin Mary there today.



Samannoud

There is a water well there which the Holy family drank from



Samannoud



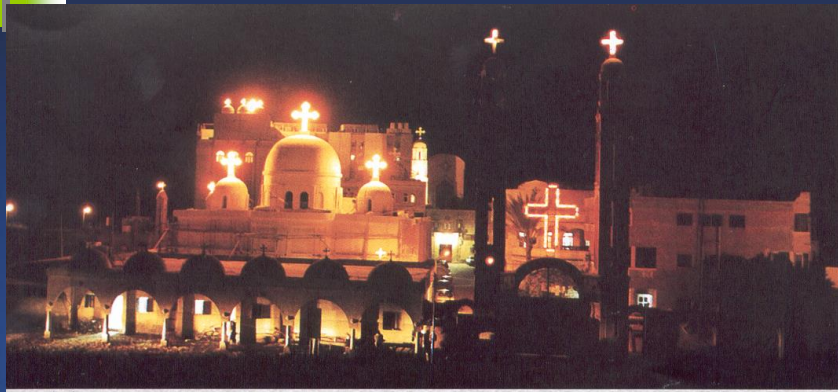
There is also a large granite trough which the Virgin Mary kneaded dough

Sakha

The Coptic name of the town (Pekhalssous) means "The foot of Jesus", for the Holy Child's foot print was marked on a rock.



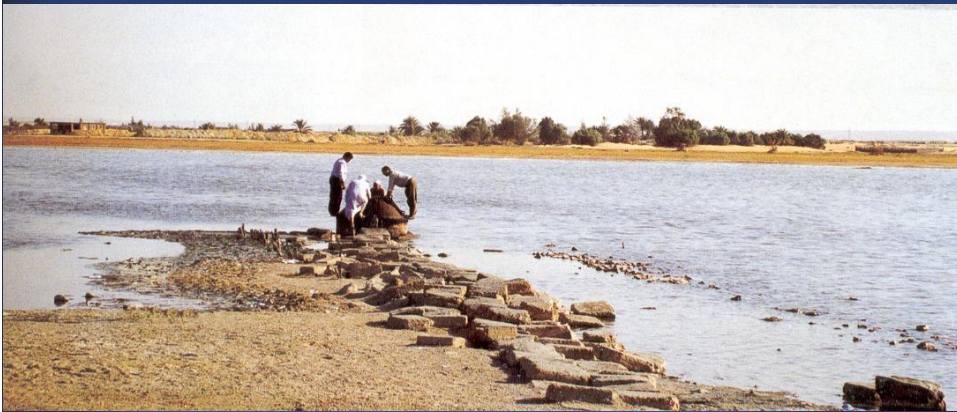
Sakha



There are many churches and convents built in this area today such as the convent of St. Demiana and the church of St. Mary

Al-Humra

The Holy Family passed by the spring of Al-Humra
The Child Jesus caused a water spring to well up from the ground, the well is called Mary's well until this day





Mary's Well

The well is in the middle of salty water



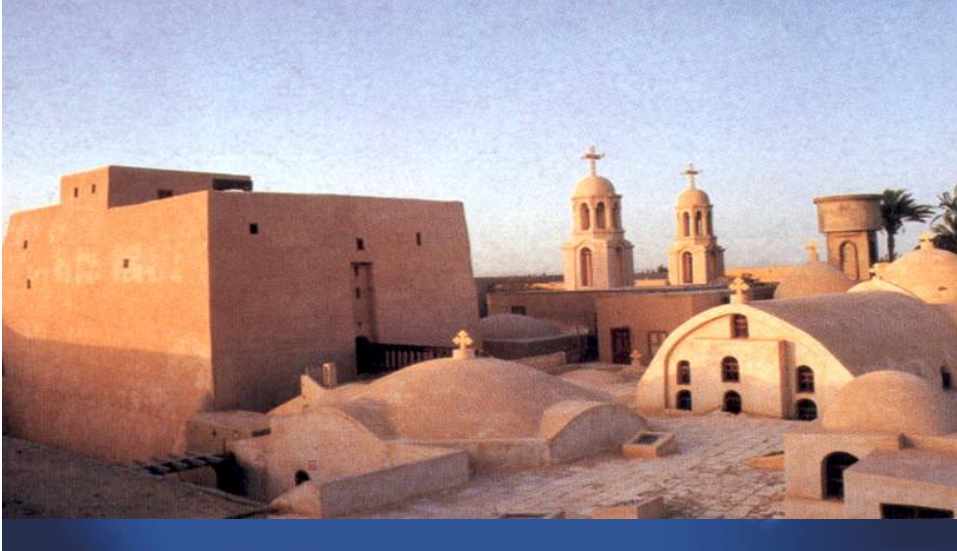
Wadi El-Natroun

Later Wadi El Natroun became the home of monastic settlements and there are many monasteries there today





The Monastery of Al-Baramous



The Monastery of Al-Baramous

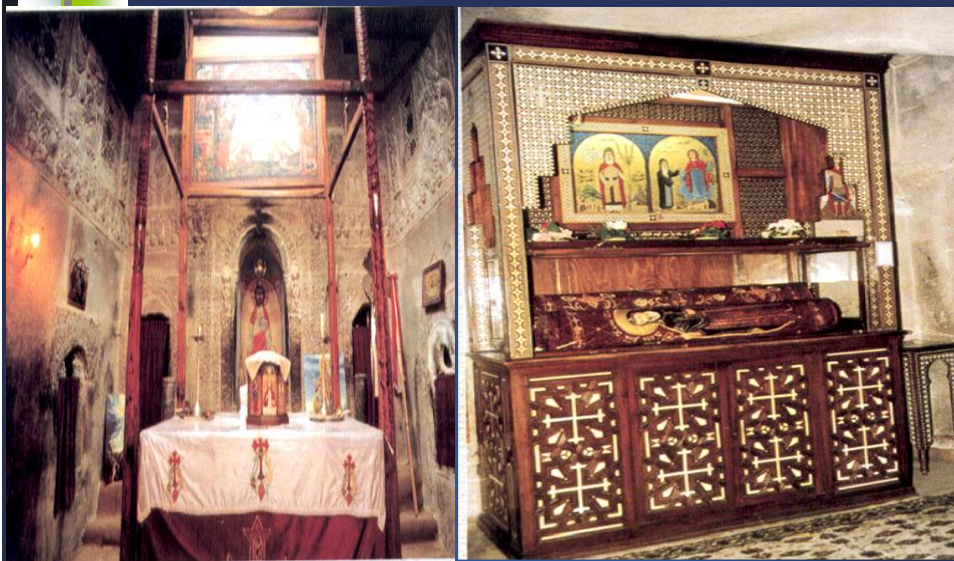
The Church of Saint John the Baptist



Monastery of Al-Surian



Monastery of Al-Surian





Monastery of St. Bishoy

Here is the body
of St. Bishoy

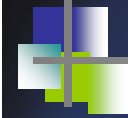


Zeitoun

The church of St. Mary in Zeitoun
where she appeared in 1968.



Inside the dome of the Church



Central Cairo



The Church of St. Philopateer in Central Cairo





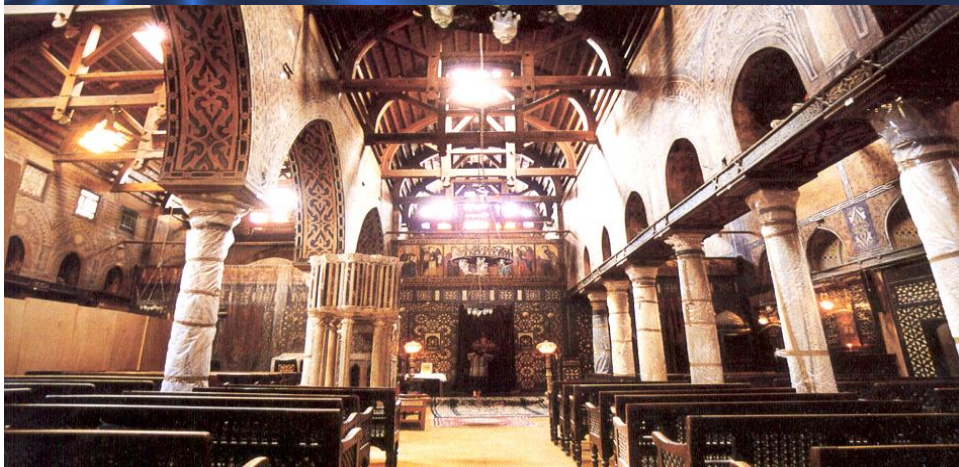
Downtown Cairo

The
Cathedral of
St. Mark in
Azbakeyah.



Old Cairo

The area now called Old Cairo is among the most important locations visited by the Holy Family.
The Hanging Church is one of the oldest Churches.



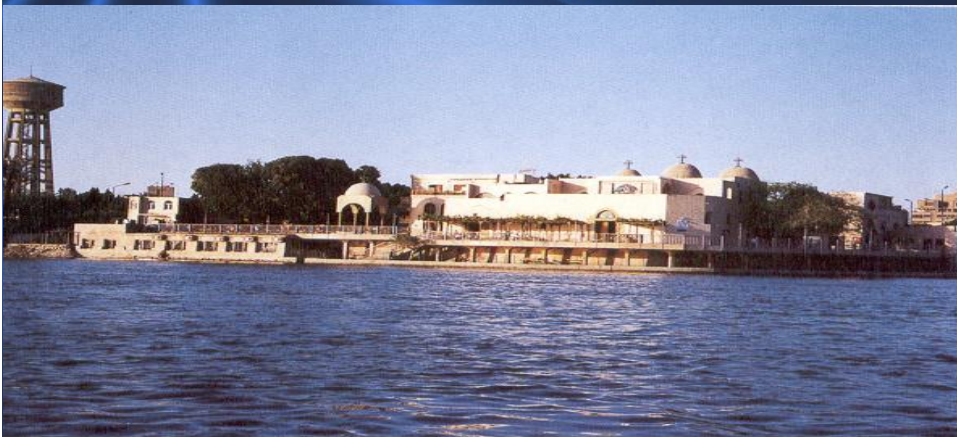
Old Cairo

The Family took shelter in a cave, later the church of St. Sergius was built.



Maady

At that time, Maady was outlying the district of Memphis, the capital of Egypt at that time.
The church of St. Mary was built there.



The Virgin's Church

On March 12th 1976 AD, a Holy Bible was carried by the ripples of the Nile to the bank below the church. It was open to Isaiah 19:25, where it says: “Blessed be Egypt my people.”



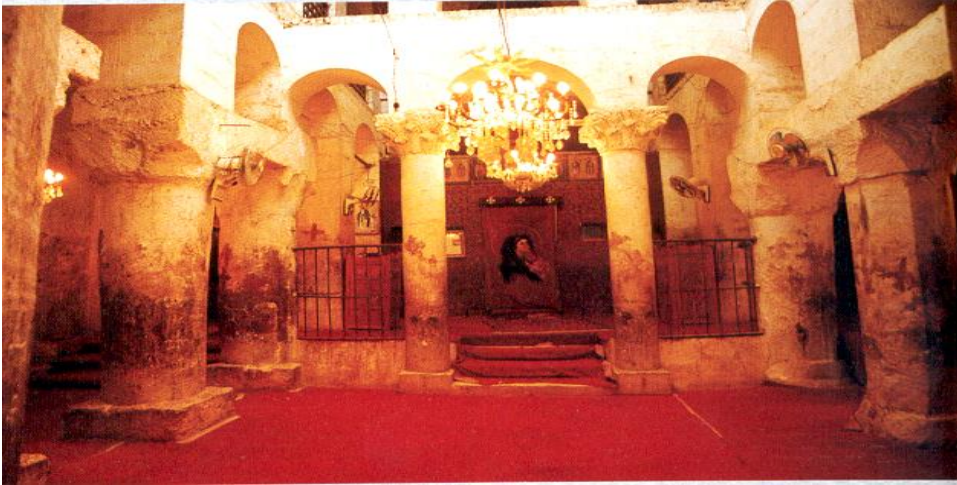
Gabal Al-Tair

They went from Maady to Behnasa to Samalout and crossed the Nile, where the Monastery of the Virgin stands today.



Gabal Al-Tair

The Holy Family rested there in a cave, which is now located inside the ancient church.



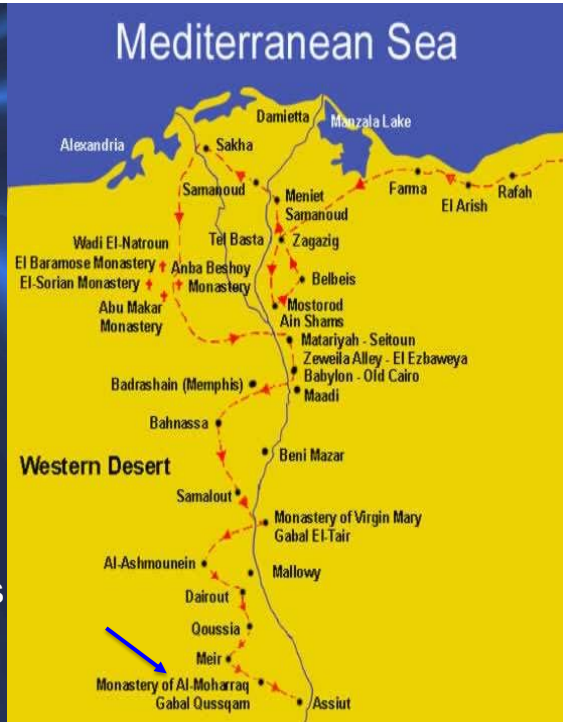
Mount of Qussqam



The monastery of Muharraq was built around the area where the Holy Family stayed for six month.

The Return Journey

- At mount Qussqam, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph and asked him to return with the Child and His mother.
- The flight Journey from Bethlehem to the return to Nazareth lasted over three years. They covered about 2000 KM.



The Return Journey

Moved by the spirit of prophecy, Hosea foresaw the flight from Bethlehem where there was no safe place for Christ the Child to lay his head, and the eventual return of the holy refugees from their sanctuary in Egypt, where Jesus had found a place in the hearts of the Gentiles, when he uttered God's words,

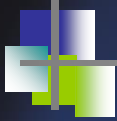
"Out of Egypt I called My Son" (Hosea 2:1)





Evaluation of the Visit

1. Fulfillment of the prophecies.
2. Sanctification of Egypt to play its unique great role in Christendom.
3. Blessedness of the Copts, people of God.
4. Destruction of idols, as a beginning of vanishing paganism, and a preparation for Christianity.
5. Egypt became a representative of Gentiles who believed in Him.
6. Many churches and monasteries were built in the locations which have been blessed by the visit .
7. Valuable blessed monuments.



The Coptic Liturgy

“For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually”

(2 Chronicles 7: 16)

والآن قد اخترت و قدست هذا البيت
ليكون اسمي فيه إلى الأبد. وتكون
عيناى وقلبي هناك كل الأيام.

