

**PASTORAL WORK
IN THE LIFE OF
FR. PISHOY KAMEL**

1995

FR. TADROS Y. MALATY

Translated and revised by:
**HOWAYDA DOSS
MICHELLE YOUSSEF
IRENE IBRAHIM
DR. NORA EL-AGAMY**

*St. Peter and St. Paul's Coptic Orthodox Church
1245 4th St.
Santa Monica - Ca. 90401*

*St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church
427 West Side Ave.*

Jersey City - NJ 07304

To my father whom I truly love.
Your soul never stopped working for the sake of every soul, when it was imprisoned in your weak body - even in the bitterest moments of pain. It will never stop working even, now, after leaving the body and fleeing towards heaven to enjoy complete freedom in God's bosom and with the saints.

When you were living in faith, God's peace filled your heart and pushed you to the pastoral work with great conviction - that everybody may experience unity with the suffering and the risen Jesus Christ. Now that you are in the Savior's bosom, seeing Him clearly, don't you long as much for the redemption of all humanity?!

I can't say that you have left your church and that you do not stand with us at God's altar, at which you were ordained. I can't say that your people have lost your care and strive for their salvation. Today you are closer to your church's altar and your people than before. You are of a greater benefit for all of us. You are standing before God's altar, which is not man made, praying with the heavenly unseen 24 priests. God uses you to fulfill His will, so you are able to perform what you could not perform before. Truly, I feel obligated to record these memories - not to praise, for with heaven and its glory you are

in no need of the earthly. Rather, these memories are
a living image of true pastoral work and the
constitution (law) of true spiritual service.

Pray for me my father so that God may grant me
two of your spirits as he granted Elisha two souls of
Elijah's the prophet.

Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty

March 23rd 1979.

V V V

HIS FAITH IN HIS MISSION

All of us know the livelihood of my beloved Father Pishoy Kamel and his glorified deeds with continuous efforts on many levels. I leave for others to list his deeds. However, my goal is to record the depth of the life he lived, as much as possible. In other words, I would like to record for the reader the secret of his success in his pastoral life, through the concepts which he believed in and lived by.

The secret of Father Pishoy's success was "his faith in his mission". Since his early years, he believed that it was impossible for him to live for a goal other than seeking the souls distant from the Lord and leading them to a life of union with God, in Jesus Christ.

After his graduation, he was appointed as a teacher. In spite of his great success, he asked one of his Sunday School colleagues if his governmental salary could be compensated for so that he could leave his job and be free for the service of God. He did not care for a post and did not ask for a financial guarantee or special privileges. He did not wait for anyone to invite him to serve God. Rather, he chose

the service, taking into account the cost: to live by
faith.

After his ordination as a priest, he never deviated from the mission in which he believed. His pastoral work was intensifying in depth and power, day by day, and moment by moment, even in the bitterest pain - to his last breath. His farewell message to me was: Service!

I can recall a few examples which show his faith
in the pastoral work:

1- In spite of his unique management skills, he left the financial matters of the church to the council and the Patriarchate. He did not even care to know the church's budget. He believed that the priest's time was too valuable to spend in non-spiritual works. This is the secret of the power of St. George's church in Sporting (Alexandria). It also may be the secret of the love of the council, the Patriarchate, and all the congregation to that church. Father Pishoy, the first priest of St. George Church in Sporting, sowed its seeds. He lived in Jesus Christ with love beyond any material consideration.

Our beloved father was not a passive man but worked for the sake of the kingdom of God without cessation. However, he believed in God's providence that whenever an idea exists for the sake of Christ

there is no need for financial planning. Truly the more he despised earthly matters the more abundant were the offers. God's blessing filled his life that not only one church was built but many others: St. George in El-Hadara, Archangel Michael in Moustafa Kamel, St. Takla Himanote in El-Ibrahimia, St. Mary and Pope Kyrillos the great in Cleopatra, and St. Peter in Sidi-Bishr.

When I was leaving for Los Angeles, Father Pishoy told me the story of its church. He found a church for sale that cost one hundred thousand dollars plus the real state commission. When he consulted the people regarding its purchase, one of the Coptic archons got upset and said, "We have collected five hundred dollars over ten years, and now Abuna (i.e.: "Father Pishoy") wants to commit us to a price which we cannot afford, setting ourselves up to financial problems." He then added, "Just because Father Pishoy succeeded in Egypt does not mean that he will succeed in America." Father Pishoy answered, "You have two weeks. Whoever finds a better church comes and presents it; and, I will have the down payment in my pocket." He meant by "my pocket," his own faith, since he did not own anything! Indeed many of the youth

made personal loans for the down payment which
was \$23,000 .

Father Pishoy continued to tell this wonderful story about God's care. After collecting a sum of money with the help of the youth of the church, they needed to collect an additional three thousand dollars within two days. With effort the sum of money was collected. He put the checks and the cash in his wallet and went to the bank, only to discover that he had lost his wallet. He asked the bank attendants regarding the whereabouts of his wallet and searched the parking lot but did not find anything. Evening came; and, there was no hope. He could not ask for a penny from anybody after they had given all they could. There was no more time! In the middle of the night, while he and the youth were puzzled what to do, a man came asking for Father Pishoy. When he met him, the man asked if he had lost his wallet. Father said, "Yes!" Then the man gave back the wallet to him. Joy filled the hearts of all. Then Mrs. Angelle told Abuna, "Ask the man if he would accept a reward." She spoke in Arabic, thinking that the man would not understand her. The man answered that he was a Moslem from Pakistan and would like to share in building the church.

The comment of my beloved Father was, "God had taught me a lesson that He is the one who takes care of buying the house He chooses!"

The archon thought that Father Pishoy would be unable to buy the church. However, many other churches were founded in Los Angeles, later on. They also contributed to the establishment of many more throughout the United States.

2- His faith in spiritual care made him say most of the time, "I wish we had not built that huge a building. Instead, we could have bought smaller pieces of land in poor areas and built simple churches to take care of our children." He believed the existence of many simple service centers to serve the word of God was better than the establishment of huge buildings.

3- His evangelic work to fulfill his personal mission of delivering God's word was amazing. Three years had not passed since his ordination, when he asked Pope Kyrillos for another priest to work with him. One of the council members who loved our father asked that the candidate for the priesthood should be taken before the altar and promise to obey Father Pishoy and not to create any trouble. But Father Pishoy commented that if the priest did not believe in the pastoral work, even his

promise before the altar would be of no use. He explained that through love the two of them can live by the same spirit.

In his pastoral visits to one of the famous Protestant ministers in Alexandria, Father Pishoy was asked to change his mind concerning the ordination of another priest. The Protestant priest assured him that it had been proven that one priest is more successful in service than two, because of the problems caused by differing opinions. However, Father Pishoy's faith in his mission pushed him to ask for more priests. The church had five priests in addition to the other ones ordained in the area due to the blessing of his love.

4- His faith in God's work and his love to spread the kingdom of heaven was wonderful. He surrounded the church with new churches from every direction. Consequently, the population of the Coptic congregation in his church grew less than the surrounding new churches! He was quite happy with the results of his service, for he did not believe in appearances or numbers but longed for the salvation of every person.

V V V

HIS LOVE TO THE CROSS

Father Pishoy believed in the power of the Cross. He pushed his confessors to contemplate on the scars of the crucified to draw from Him the power of love and receive God's work in their lives. In his passionate love to the Cross he wrote two books: "At the Foot of the Cross" and "With Christ I was Crucified". He put above his bed a picture of the crucified Jesus Christ with St. Mary Magdalene kneeling at His feet.

During his last days, when he had a high fever and was not in his full awareness (as if speaking through his subconscious), he was talking about how much he loved that picture and asked his wife to buy herself a similar one .

When the disease had progressed, Dr. Halim, who was responsible for our beloved priest's medical care, was joking with him to ease his pain, asking: "What do you like about the picture, father?" Father was silent for a while, then in a calm deep manner said, "What can I say? Indeed, Mary chose the best place ever found!"

Father Pishoy's famous words about the Cross include:

"The more we contemplate on the Cross, the more our unity and knowledge become deeper with the Lord Jesus Christ."

"The Christian cannot say that he knows Christ unless he has a sacred unity with and continuous contemplation on Christ's Cross. So let us start a ten minute daily retreat to contemate on Him who was crucified for us."

"Carrying the Cross is a daily invitation. The Cross, Oh Lord, was inside Your heart since the very beginning, before You carried it on Your back.

The Cross represents Your love and sacrifice."

"The best scene that satisfies my eyes is to see You carrying the Cross; for, it is the satisfaction of my cross..."

"The Cross is the sign of the Son of Man, and the sign of the children of God."

The secret of the power in his worship and his pastoral life was his preoccupation with the Cross and his desire for everyone to share and enjoy with him the blessings of the Cross.

Finally, God wanted to honor him with the gift of cancer. So that he may enter into the joyful unity of suffering with Christ carrying His Cross, God crowned his life with the gift of pain.

In His love, God allowed me to return from Australia for the last seven months before Father Pishoy's departure, that I may behold his service in its best picture. He did a great deal of service while he was on the bed of sickness, facing pain with joy. His open door and heart to the people that I witnessed in my beloved father's life were most touching. Sometimes he would groan because he was unable to serve. During his last week, his wife told him, "You will get better, father. Rise and pray the Liturgy." He answered sadly, "I have not prayed for two years." My soul could not bear those words. God had hidden from his eyes the power of his service during his sickness.

Many people found comfort in their sickness or troubles by merely seeing our father in pain or hearing about his patience and joy! I always remembered what St. Augustine said: " A joyful priest on his bed of sickness for thirty years is a far better service than preaching."

Finally, when God wanted to honor our father, he passed away on the third day of the glorified feast of the Cross.

On the night of the feast of the Holy Cross, his holiness Pope Shenouda the third visited our father at home. The visit was as if God had wanted the

militant church to honor our father in the person of Pope Shenouda. In addition, the heavenly hosts received him in the days of the Cross feast.

On this night our father asked Dr. Awad Kalds, who accompanied him with a loving group of doctors and did not depart from him day or night: "What feast is it today?...the feast of the Holy Cross?" The doctor asked him not to talk because of his sickness. He responded, "Why are you afraid? The Cross feast is the feast of power! The Cross feast is the feast of freedom... I am longing to talk about the Cross. Do not keep me from talking about It. Our mission is to show the power of the Cross to everyone!" He then started to speak powerfully about the Cross.

It is said, " The body is weak; but, the soul is strong." Through the Cross, though his body was fading away day by day till his death, his soul never fainted. Indeed, his soul increased in power and hope. His inner person was being rejuvenated like an eagle. Thus, he lived all his life - till the last breath - without spiritual aging. In him we see the following words come true: "A Christian does not know aging because his spirit is renewed by the Cross."

V V V

HIS CONCERN FOR HIS ETERNITY

Father Pishoy's love to serve and preach did not take him from his concealed life with God and his concern regarding his eternity. He believed that service cannot be successful without a sacred life. Unless man is open to all with love and serves others, he cannot enjoy God's blessings. Thus our father did not separate his personal life from his service, each one depended on and supported the other.

One of the most beautiful virtues of our beloved father was that in spite of his great experience in the spiritual life and in serving, he rarely talked about himself or his personal experiences. He wanted to hide behind the image of Christ. In other words, he did not want to expose his life to people's praising and feared the enemy's wars of false pride. Father Pishoy was truly saying with the Apostle: "Lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become rejected."

We can touch how this giant was preoccupied with his eternity, even in the midst of his service, and how concerned he was with his spiritual growth.

Once I met him in Los Angeles to receive the service, after he had spent ten months there. He told me, " God has sent you because I felt as if in a drought, in need to return to Egypt to live in the spiritual atmosphere." These words stayed with me while serving in America and Australia. I also longed to return to Egypt, not to escape from responsibility but to seek my eternity and the eternity of those whom I serve.

His care for his eternity appeared in the priests' meetings. Once during one of our meetings we started to judge one of the servants. So he asked us - Fr. Luke and I - to start a retreat with him: "If any of the three of us starts to talk aimlessly, the others should say that we do not wish to hear it." His wife also said that whenever she talked about anyone, he would immediately interrupt and stop the chat.

In our meetings the only matter which he concerned himself with was a self evaluation of the service in St. George's church in Sporting, and our self evaluation concerning our eternity and our inner life with Jesus Christ.

We can touch God's work through His care for his inner life. I know some family problems which he had solved without words or reproach. Sometimes it was enough for him to enter the house

and pray. A married couple once said that they had been fighting for a while but upon his entry to their home they felt the presence of Jesus. Their earlier love was easily restored.

Today, the Church is in true need of holy fathers whom God can fill with His peace, manifesting His blessings even on their outer appearance.

Finally, God has indeed given us a great comfort. During the last hours, Father Pishoy not only entrusted us with the service and stretched out his hands to bless us, but also said in a wondering voice, "What is this hole above?" His nephew, Nabil, asked him "Above where, father?" In a very low voice he said, "Heaven!"

Thus, God crowned the days of his journey on earth by opening the gates of heaven before him. This did not take him from leaving his own will concerning the service and giving his blessings. I say that in the last moments his serving soul combined with his life with God and his enjoyment of the eternal heritage.

V V V

HIS SPIRITUAL FATHERHOOD

Father Pishoy deceased on, March 21st 1979 - Mother's day or the family day in Egypt. This was not by chance. He was known for his true spirit of fatherhood in Jesus Christ. You might say that he declared the motherhood of the church through which man discovers God's fatherhood.

St. Cyprian said: "No one can take God as his

Father unless he takes the church as his mother."

Our beloved father was known for his thoughtful deeds under all circumstances. His deeds were not superficial in nature, but presented true fatherly sharing in Jesus Christ. Father Pishoy made each person feel special.

He shared with his children everything. With the successful, he joined their joy of success. With those who suffered, he also suffered. Many returned to him in their personal matters. With his spiritual wisdom he transferred them to a spiritual level. In other words, he did not merely share their feelings, but he knew how to direct people in all conditions to enjoy the Lord Christ. If one succeeded he would ask him to offer thanks to God pushing him to the

life of repentance. If one suffered he would ask him to go to God, the Hope of those who call upon Him. His fatherhood appeared clearly during the feasts. Since he was ordained, he used to visit the poor families prior to the feast. He distributed the list of names to the priests of the church to visit the people and help them feel the motherhood of the church, who does not forget her children.

There was not a single feast, throughout the years I have lived with him, that Father Pishoy returned home with his wife alone to celebrate. He shared every feast with the youth who had no family in town. He also used to visit the families after the liturgy at 1:00 a.m. and sometimes accompanied some of the less fortunate to their homes. His love could not let him enjoy the feast without sharing it with those who suffered.

His fatherhood appeared clearly in solving problems. People used to seek him in their work, family or financial problems, and with a fatherly heart he supported many.

I had witnessed him solving many family problems. He was truly filled with love and wisdom. While listening to the various disputing parties, he would give a loving smile and never judge one or the other. Our loving father knew he had to listen to

the parties, but at the same time knew what his mission and position were: He is a father to all, who loves all, and is not a judge or a policeman. Therefore, very rarely would one find him rebuking or yelling at anyone. Furthermore, one would never hear him screaming angrily, following his Master's example.

In his amazing fatherhood he taught us, the priests of the church, not to point out to one another the weaknesses of our children in the church, unless one of us is delivering the care of a soul or a problem to another.

Because of his fatherhood, he provided many families with a monthly salary. He cared for them without anyone knowing! Many were able to accomplish their university studies due to his charity.

V V V

HIS LAW OF LOVE

Besides our father's superior ability for administration and management, his core belief was love. He loved God from all his heart and reflected this in his love for his congregation, his fellow priests, and the Pope Kyrillos. He also loved non-Christians. His heart was a flame of love. Father Pishoy wanted to give his life to others in the name of Jesus Christ.

1- His Love To God:

With every breath of his life, he offered a pure sacrifice of love to God. He did not serve as a paid worker or as an employee but as a true son. He didn't expect any financial or literary reward. Through love he was kind to everybody; but like a lion, he never feared death nor anyone. He said: "Love has its own labor and does not wait for reward. It is pleased with fatigue. The servant seeks it with lots of hard work and joy - like the Lord Jesus Christ, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12). Of this the apostle Paul said, "Charity bears all things, hopes all things, seeks not her own" (1 Corinthians 13). The servant's

efforts and his pains for the sake of charity are considered part of the pains of Jesus Christ. The apostle, St. Paul, accepted these pains with joy when he said, "I, who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind, of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church..." (Colossians 1:24).

2- His Love To His People:

Father Pishoy's love to God was reflected in his relations with his people. He did not serve with the spirit of a routine scholastic teacher nor did he teach in a philosophic way. He worked with the energy of love which let him enter into the hearts of his people through Jesus Christ, who is love. Our Father Pishoy reminds us with the words of Mar Jacob El-Serougy: "You teachers of the divine secrets speak with love. Whoever teaches and does not love better be silent, because his work is in vain and he is not gaining souls. The wise man, if he wants to gain his disciples, has to love much and talk little."

Also, St. Ambrose said: "Moses deserved to be above all to the extent that they could not look at his face (Exodus 34:30)..he enchanted them. They loved him more because of his kindness than because of the miracles fulfilled through his hands."

Thus, our father Pishoy succeeded through the love he showed for his people. Therefore, his words in sermons or private meetings were powerful, and he was granted a position in his people's eyes better than a miracle worker. He used to meet them with open arms and knew many of them by name.

His love was wise and in the Lord. Using his time wisely, many times he would be in quiet places inside Alexandria or at the outskirts of the city. His favorite place was the cemetery, where he used to take some of his papers and his Bible and sit among the tombs reading his Bible and spiritual books and writing books or pamphlets.

He used to tell me, "20 minutes is enough for a visit." In this way we could visit all the people. However, if he saw a person in need, Father Pishoy would stay for hours or even days with that person. He was not an employee who cared for performing a formal job. Indeed, he was a loving father.

In one of the council meetings we were discussing the subject of pastoral visits. On our way home he commented on the discourse which took place in the meeting: "The issue is not the number of visits. It is easy for the priest to write in his notes countless numbers of visits; but, the need is for the

spirit. The priest might visit the families; but, the people need a loving heart, keen for their salvation." Finally, I do not want to forget his love especially for those who were sick with cancer. He used to call it "the disease of Paradise," because the patient feels that his days have come to an end so he repents and shares Jesus Christ His pains. He used to visit those patients almost daily, and sometimes twice a day. If he heard about such patient outside Alexandria, he would try to travel to him. As if God had prepared his heart with love to share those patients not only by visits but also through actual pain, he had entered the temptation with them and passed it victoriously with spiritual faith.

He longed for this disease and asked for it. His wife was not comfortable with this wish. He used to tell her, "This specific disease is from God. It has nothing to do with man... for it has unknown causes." In England when he heard the doctor tell him the truth of the disease and his dismal prognosis, our father did not worry. He prayed. His wife started to shake and told him, "I feel trembled from inside." However, he told her, "Where is our faith? Is it words to preach others with?"

3- His Love To The Priests:

The secret of St. George Church's success was the mutual love and understanding that our beloved father Pishoy created therein. The church was a good example of love among the priests. We worked together as priests of one and the same church, on any item concerning church affairs with the spirit of love and respect the one to another's opinion, without alteration, no matter time passes, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Whenever he knew that a priest was not comfortable with a certain matter, he never approached it during the council meetings. Before any meetings, the priests would gather and discuss the subjects. This preserved the dignity of the priests before the people.

None of the people could interfere among the priests of the church. If one of us felt that a person was angry at one of the priests, he would hurry and tell his fellow priest to comfort this person.

God's blessing had supported the church not through the efforts of the servants but more through their love to each other. As God said, "These things I command you, that you love one another." (John 15:17). Father Pishoy had veiled any weakness among priests and servants of God, supported each soul for the edification of the kingdom of God.

During the first years of my ordination, Father Pishoy was angry once at one of the servants of the church and after two days he came to me and said, "Can you imagine that the mistake I made by yelling at the servant was spread quickly among the people." He commented by saying that, "The people request ultimate idealism from the priest. We have to be calm so as not to hurt others." And this was the first and last time I saw him angry at someone. He had set the foundation of love among the workers in the church through his love and kindness.

4- His Love To People In Charge:

Father Pishoy was characterized by his love for the previous Pope Kyrillos and the present Pope Shenouda.

He loved the Pope and obeyed him. One would never hear him say in hypocrisy any false words. He opened his heart frankly without compliment, with a humble soul. Indeed, our father was entirely a man of church.

In our special meetings, even during his last days, he used to say several times, "Our Pope is heavily burdened... May God support him." He was keen not to refer any problem to the Pope unless there was no way out otherwise. Father Pishoy also

said, "The priests always load the Pope with problems. I wish we could make it easier for him. He has enough to deal with." He was truly longing to support the Pope and not to be a burden. Several years ago one of the priests spoke harshly about the Pope. Father Pishoy said to me, "How could this priest stand before the altar and pray for the Pope and talk this way?"

5- His Love To Non-Christians:

As Father Pishoy was diseased, one of the church council members met a non-Christian man who was crying. When asked if he knew Father Pishoy, the man said, "He provided us for my daughter's marriage."

True love is when man loves and gives everyone without limit.

St. John Chrysostom says: "The priest is God's agent. He has to take care of all humanity because he is a father for the whole world."

V V V

A MAN OF PRAYER

Father Pishoy believed that the pastoral work is the work of the "Greatest Shepherd" - i.e.: our Lord Jesus Christ, who is able to satisfy the multitude, open the inner eyes and attract the hearts to heaven. In his speech about pastoral work, Father Pishoy said: "The priest - 'Presbyter' - is a mediator. His main work is to pray for his people and to offer the liturgy sacrifice for their own sake." As Samuel the prophet said: "I cannot sin against God and stop praying. Prayer is the servant's power in every aspect of the service. The divine liturgy reveals to us this secret. The priest prays for himself and for his people saying: 'For the sake of the sick, the travelers, the departed, the president, as well as for the Pope...'"

Another issue is the servant's responsibility to teach his people the life of prayer. If he fails to do so, he has taught them nothing. Father Pishoy cared for the life of prayer and published St. Nilus of Sinai essay "About prayer", which is in "El Philocalia". He also published a book about "Jesus' Prayer."

He loved the psalms' prayers and was keen on giving exercises to the youth, during the summer vacations, to commit the psalms to memory.

He loved the short prayers like "Jesus' Prayer," and asked his children in confession to repeat it many times especially before sleeping.

In any public or private meeting he started with a powerful, not routine, prayer and also ended it with a prayer. He used to stand in the sanctuary with amazing meekness. I never saw him sitting on a chair inside the sanctuary except when he was severely ill. His conscience was not comfortable in sitting in the sanctuary. Many times he left the chair and sat on the floor, despite his pains. He carried this spirit after his spiritual father, Fr. Michael Ibrahim, whom he admired especially for being a man of prayer.

During his life, Father Pishoy was blessed in many ways. God used him powerfully. Through Father Pishoy, the following words were fulfilled: "And God was with him. He was successful." Everything he worked on was prosperous and successful. The following are examples:

1- He wanted to open an orphanage for boys and girls in St. George's name. Two girls from Upper-Egypt came to him; so, he called a lady asking her to

open the orphanage immediately. The lady asked him: "Who is going to stay with those two girls?" He thought for a while and said: "I'd prefer to find one of the young women to stay with them..." He remembered the name of a young woman he had not seen for a long time. While he was not able to go to her, he found the same lady knocking at his door to ask him about something. He told her about the orphanage and she answered: "I consider myself happy to live with those two little girls..." Thus God's blessing was supporting him for being a man of prayer.

2- He told a story which happened to him several years ago: One of the ladies who used to confess to him was very bitter and broken hearted. Her husband was alien from God. He did not bare to go to church and did not accept visits of any priest. Furthermore, if he found a religious picture, he would tear it apart. Father used to tell her to keep on praying on his behalf. Days have passed and nothing changed. However, our beloved father was always giving her hope assuring her of the power of prayer. Suddenly her husband fell sick and he asked her if she had a picture of the crucified Jesus. She was reluctant to give it to him lest he might tear it; but, she realized his good intentions this time. So she

gave him the picture and he put it on his chest and started to cry heavily. He asked her to call a priest fast. He confessed and the following day took communion. Shortly thereafter, he passed away. This was the work of prayer in this family and many other families.

V V V

A CHURCHMAN

Our beloved father lived as a "churchman". He loved the church as God's bride, and was aware of his membership in it. He accepted Jesus through it and preached in the name of Christ .

In his speech with the students of the Faculty of Theology in Alexandria he said: "The shepherd ties his sheep in the sheepfold, i.e. the church, through its feasts, the life of its saints, its history, fasting, worships, and readings in different occasions.

The church is the sheepfold in which the sinners enter and are saved and find pasture.

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep (John 10)..'"

This was not a mere speech but an experience lived by this ecclesiastic father. The following are some examples:

1- His sermons were deep and spiritual. They carried God's powerful word, practically translating the church rites and history, and explaining the life

of the saints. Not one sermon failed to mention the power of the Holy Spirit, which was granted us through baptism and Mayron (Chrism). He was always speaking of the sacred life and pushed us to enjoy the holy sacraments in order to reach a deeper union with the Holy One. He used to speak also about the life of the saints as a picture of the unity with God.

2- Once I saw him in deep pain for two successive weeks, so I asked him for the reason. He answered that his heart was heavily burdened because of those who pretend jealousy for the salvation of others while ignoring God's power through the sacraments of the church and its worship. He told me that his sickness would not allow him to concentrate on writing to help make the people aware of those pitfalls. Our beloved father also pointed out that it is our responsibility to ask our bishops in their parishes to warn the people of this deceit. He praised the Pope a lot because of his concern to instruct and teach the people and servants of the church, through the El-Keraza magazine.

I think that one of his farewell wishes was for the churchmen to keep the living tradition in order that our children may live with the spirit of the church and enjoy the active membership in it.

3- Our beloved father loved the Coptic language as his ancestor's language and cherished it. During the special liturgies he used it a lot. However, he was keen not to pray with it on Sundays or Fridays. He wished that everybody pray with one soul and understanding, and not just listen to a foreign language. He believed that the Coptic language must be taught first, then it can be prayed with; so, that people might understand and share the priest and the deacons in Spirit.

4- Before his sickness, *Abuna* loved to pray the liturgy almost every day, as long as he could. He prayed it in a simple manner with his tender voice. One could feel that he was on a trip to heaven, crying with his heart to God and sharing with heavenly hosts their hymns - not fond of his own voice or songs.

5- In my early days of service he used to adjoin me in seeking sick people. It was really remarkable that he prayed on behalf of the sick in the open, because he wanted the patients and the attendants to share in the prayers.

6- Father Pishoy succeeded in his service abroad because he presented the church's thought as a living spirit rather than any rites. Abroad we find different schools of thoughts. Some of them follow

the rite but without spirit. Others used to pray the vespers which nobody but one deacon attended. Others thought that the vespers were not a convenient rite for immigrants so they stopped it. However, Father Pishoy and others like him attracted the people to pray the vespers and taste the beauty of the rite of the church mixed with God's living word. He was concerned with the feasts of the saints and the heavenly choirs. A great many shared the prayers during the Holy Week and Good Friday and the night of *Apoclapsis* - even though some of them never experienced this before in Egypt. Thus our father proved to us the power of true rite even abroad, because he presented it with a spirit of meek righteousness.

7- In Los Angeles, 1970, I was surprised that Father Pishoy was distributing Pope Kyrillos' picture among the congregation during his pastoral visits, an act which I never saw him do while in Egypt. I asked him for the reason. He answered, in wisdom, "While the people in Egypt do not need these pictures because the Pope is not a stranger to them, the new generation in America, on the other hand, might live and hear nothing about the Pope. It is the priest's responsibility to assure the fatherhood of the Pope as a part of church tradition."

8- His love for the saints and the angels was amazing. He said: "In the middle of the service burdens, it is sufficient to visit one of the monasteries to return full of God's blessings manifest in his saints.

Years ago Father Pishoy met a man who had a certain weakness. He tried to talk to him about Christ's love but there was no response. After a short while he asked this person to visit St. Pishoy monastery. As soon as this person entered the church, he stood before the body of the saint and shed in tears. It was as if St. Pishoy's prayers and blessings drew this person to repentance.

Since then our father made it a habit to visit the monasteries - taking with him some of his beloved, especially those who were under tribulation.

9- Being a man of church continued to manifest in his last sermons and writings. He focused on church readings throughout the year to proclaim the wisdom of the Holy Spirit working in the church fathers, and to learn himself and others what the Spirit wants from us in every occasion.

10- He was keen to discover the saints' blessings in his life and service. Indeed, our beloved father felt close to the saints and loved a lot of them, especially: St. Mary, the Mother of the true Light;

Archangel Michael; St. George, the martyr; St. Mina, the martyr; and St. Abraam, the previous Bishop of El-Fayoum.

When he spoke of saints and the heavenly ones, he made one feel that he talked about someone beloved, dear, and intimate. Some coincident events took place that is really amazing divine arrangements. For example, when he traveled abroad for the first time to serve, it was St. Mark the Evangelist's feast. Another example was the day when he started praying in St. Mary's Church in Cleopatra, he discovered that it was the memory of her feast.

During the period of his last illness, he had a high fever to the extent of losing orientation. He talked a lot about St. Mina, the martyr. Even during the last moments, when he lost his ability to think clearly, his subconscious being filled with love for the saints, became clear in his words and behaviors. One of the ladies asked him, "What can you see father?" He answered that he had gone to St. Mina's monastery with a family and started to talk about St. Elisha. After a while I asked him, "Who do you like more, St. Mina or St. Elisha?" Although he was unconscious he said, "I love them both. Each of

them has his work. St. Mina makes miracles and
Elisha prophecies."

Finally I want to write a story about St. George's
work with him:

Our father used to take care of one of the youth
for his repentance. However, the boy was strongly
holding on to sin. He used to avoid meeting Father
Pishoy. One day this boy had a date with a girl,
whom he was going to meet in El-Ibrahimia station.
The girl was a little late, so he started to worry and
not wanting to wait he walked in front of the church
from El-Ibrahimia station to Sporting station (the
church location). The boy said: "I felt while walking
that someone had caught me and pushed me to the
house of God. I did not find anyone in the church.
While standing before the altar and St. George's
icon, I started to cry." This was his new start with
Jesus Christ.

V V V

HIS MEEKNESS

Our Father Pishoy earned a great reputation among the Copts, inside and outside Egypt. Also, many non-Christians loved him. It is hard to find a Coptic person who never heard of him or praised him. Yet God granted him a humble and meek soul. He used to say to me: "Our people are simple. They are happy with little things. I have no idea why they praise me that much..." He always felt guilty about his short comings in his service to others.

Maybe one of the reasons for him to go through that serious illness was to increase his meekness. During the last week, I cannot forget when his wife told him: "Father, that's enough, rise and go pray in your church." He said quietly, in tears, "I haven't prayed for two years, Angele." These were the feelings of humility with which he was crowned during his last days on earth.

A few hours before his departure, he called me and asked me to pray for him the absolution prayer. This shocked me, as I felt not worthy of doing so, yet I obeyed. After midnight Father Matthew and Father Michael entered and he also asked them the same thing. He crowned all his deeds with an amazing meek spirit.

HIS LOVE FOR LEARNING

In Father Pishoy's funeral, his Holiness Pope Shenouda III talked about him and his foundation of a new spiritual school in Alexandria, which affected the Copts inside as well as outside of Egypt. The Pope of Alexandria, along with many others, witnessed this teacher's love for learning. He was always learning at the school of prayer from the Holy Bible and the other spiritual books. He was learning from others, too. Father Pishoy was like an active bee collecting the nectar from each flower. He picked what was good for his growth, not only from bishops or priests but also from laymen and sometimes even from non-Christians, without losing his dignity and his position as a teacher and a leader.

I remember before my ordination, while I was learning some of the Liturgy hymns inside the church, he took me aside and said: "I prefer that this learning takes place outside the church because people always want to see their priest with the position of a leader who teaches." However, this does not mean that the priest has to be proud of

himself. The following are some simple examples which show his spirit of continuous learning:

1- Once his Holiness Pope Shenouda III, while not yet a Pope, entered a church, knelt before the sanctuary and kissed the altar. Fr. Pishoy whispered in my ears: "It is a nice habit to kiss the altar. Our bishop must have learnt this from the elders. There are too many things which we cannot learn from books but can learn from previous generations. Since then, he never entered the church without kissing the altar.

2- At the beginning of his service, he attended one of the universal conferences in Switzerland. The subject of the conference was " Money in the Christian Concept. " I asked him about his opinion about the conference. He disapproved the western way of thinking because it was influenced by social and financial trends with little regard to spirituality. He also said: "The church as a whole did not benefit from this conference; but, personally, I benefited from interacting with some Christian leaders and thinkers of other churches."

From his point of view these conferences are not beneficial to the church except for the representative of the church, through his personal dealings with the attendants. Our teacher once

commented on the behavior of some priest: "While we were together after one of the meetings, some priest asked for a chance to pray privately. Why don't we have the courage to interrupt any if we feel in need for the moment to lift our hearts to God?" With this spirit, he lived learning and benefiting from others.

3- Many years ago, on our way home he said: "This person (X) is very pure hearted." Our father said it in a way as if he himself wished to be like this person. He felt this way despite the fact of a conflict in opinion between this person and Father Pishoy. How great it is that this leader could see the purity of heart in a person who opposes him. He used to learn from anybody and benefit even from those who disagree with him. He fulfilled the words of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan's: "I want to exert effort in learning so I would be able to teach. There is only one Master - that is God - who does not learn what He teaches. As for humans, they have to learn before teaching and have to receive from God what they will teach."

V V V

HIS KINDNESS TO SINNERS

St. Ambrose wrote: "Jesus was kind to us so as not to scare us but to draw us to Him. He came in kindness and meekness and said: 'Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11:28). Thus he invited us to seek Him and did not shut us out. In choosing His disciples, Jesus chose those who manifest His will, gather God's people - not scatter them. Those who are hardheaded, show no kindness or meekness, or ask for the mercy of God for themselves nor for others, cannot be considered God's disciples... ."

Our beloved father fulfilled God's will by being meek and kind to everybody. People have witnessed the following about him:

1- He always gave hope in the merits of the blood of Jesus Christ. No one - whatever his or her sin be - sat with our father without feeling how trivial the sin was, touching the power of the active Holy Spirit inside him and believing that through Jesus Christ he is able to rise again.

2- In his sermons, he did not talk much about sin but about Jesus Christ. He believed that one's

meeting with Christ will conquer sin and destroy
despair within him.

3- If someone once complained about his sins during confession, the kind father would not ask for details but lead him to positive spiritual life. If someone complained about carnal pains, Father Pishoy would say: "Don't say that. God created this body and He made it holy."

4- He always assured us of our adoption to God. He explained that sin is no more part of our nature but is foreign to us. Our nature is holy through our unity with the Only-Begotten Son Jesus Christ. Thus his children smelled the aroma of joyful hope.

V V V

HIS DISCIPLESHIP AND ABILITY FOR TEACHING

Fr. Pishoy was truly a preacher who witnessed to Jesus Christ in his sermons and private meetings, in his silence and his talk, in his firmness and his kindness, and in his smile. He was talking about salvation to everyone. He put in his heart to consecrate every moment of his life on behalf of true witnessing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I do not exaggerate on saying that Fr. Pishoy, in health, in sickness and even in his death witnessed to Jesus Christ. His departure impressed many people to enjoy the life of repentance in a weeks' time of his joining the heavenly hosts. For example, one of the youth told me: "Fr. Pishoy was tired of me and I always let him down because of my sin. However, on Thursday March 22nd, when I entered the church and stood before his corpse, I felt committed to please his heart. So I offered a true repentance that I still experience powerfully."

Another said: "When I entered the church and stood before his corpse, I felt a great urge to stay virgin and asked him to pray for me."

A great many of his children, who could not confess because of his sickness, came this week in repentance asking to live with God. The sign of his success is that the seeds he has sown are growing and becoming his crowns of glory - the secret of his joy in heaven. His service did not die because of his departure to heaven. Its power is intensifying day after day.

The following points concerning his teaching service are noteworthy, besides what I have already referred to:

1- Our father was a flexible man in his pastoral work. He knew how to deal with the rich and the poor. He dealt with wise men cleverly and played with children tenderly. Married couples found consult in him; and virgins asked for his advice.

In other words, he reflected what St. John Chrysostom said: "The priest deals with the married, the children, the rich, and people of high rank and power. He has to be a man who knows how to deal with everyone. I am not saying that he has to be a hypocrite, but very flexible, knowing how to suit everybody in order to lead people, under any circumstances, to Jesus. As a doctor must never give the same medicine to all patients, or a ship's captain should know that there is more than one way to face

the winds, the priest has to be kind and firm because it is impossible to treat all the people the same way, even one and the same person may once need kindness and another firmness for the edification of his soul.

The ability of dealing with people in many effective ways is what one saw in our father. As one recognized him with children, thought he was gifted with children's service. Another saw him serving the youth, felt he was specialized in this service. He served the immigrants as if he had been serving among them for many years.

2- Our father, who everyone longed to hear his voice, was perfect in silence. When he talked, the hearer's heart leapt on hearing God's words of blessing. When he was silent, one felt a special kind of blessing.

The following words of Pope Gregory were fulfilled in Father Pishoy: "He has to be wise in his silence, beneficial in his words; lest he says what is supposed to be secret and keeps what is supposed to be uttered."

3- He was famous for his smiling face and his high spirit; but, he never knew sarcasm - not in his sermons nor in his private meetings. His inner seriousness was reflected on his life. On the subject

of sarcasm, St. Ambrose the great wrote: "No one of the clergymen utters a joking word or sentence - not among the clergymen nor among the ordinary people." St. Ambrose also said: "People of the world use many types of speech, such as jokes. We have to avoid them. Although some manners of speech are joyful, they may not be convenient for priesthood. How can we adopt a way of speaking not found in the Holy Bible. Brother...don't just avoid excess sarcasm but avoid all kinds of sarcasm."

4- Father Pishoy was concerned with private service. He was a father of everyone. He spent most of his life in pastoral visits to his people sitting with his children in confession, or meeting with them when they were sick. He was as the busy bees, never knowing a limit to his labor for the sake of everyone. In his private service, he never fell in despair in any one's salvation. He believed that God will never forget the labor of love.

5- He was concerned with the public service, as well. Though this great servant was ordained on St. George's altar, he was a father of everyone inside and outside the region. Great numbers of people turned to him in their private and general problems.

6- He was concerned with the written word. In spite of his many responsibilities, he published many

books. In addition he presented and published books to different authors, namely, Ms. Iris Habib El-Masry, Dr. Ragheb Abdel-Nour, and others, through the church.

7- He was famous for his great ability to make use of capacities and talents. Father Pishoy knew that the real servant is the one who develops the talents of his children in service. Consequently, numerous priests, monks, nuns, and servants were his graduates.

V V V

May God accept his pure soul in the bosom of the saints and grant us through his prayers the blessings of the militant life in Jesus Christ our God . Amen.

V V V