

The Flight Of The Holy Family to Egypt

"Blessed is Egypt My People " (isa . 19 : 25)



Out Of Egypt I Called My Son (Mat 2 : 15)

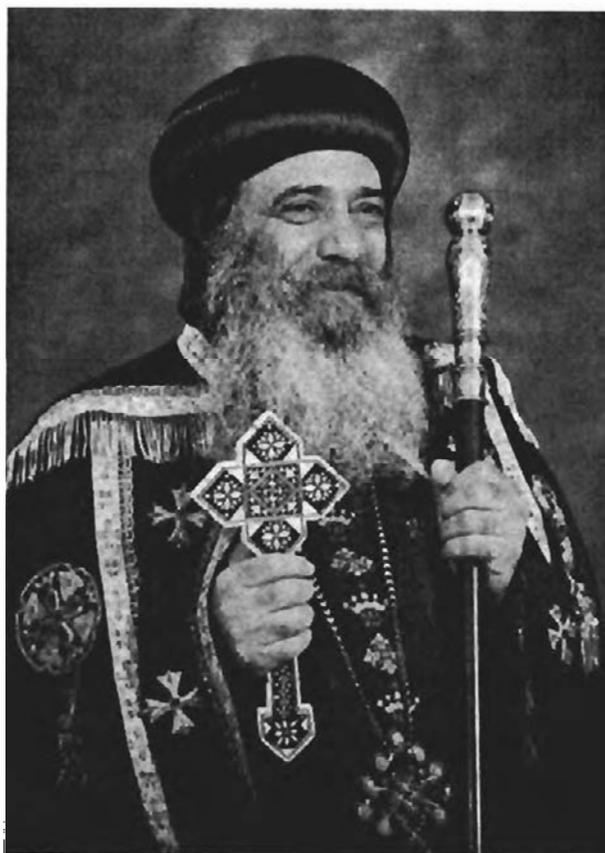
Preparation
Fr. Philopos Anba - Bishoy

**The Flight
of The Holy Family to Egypt**

**Preparation
Fr. Philopos Anba - Bishoy**

Deposit No : 16927 / 99

Nubar Printing House



**His Holiness
Pope Shenode III**



**His Groce
Bishop Sarabamon**

The Flight of The Holy Family From Bethlehem to Egypt

“Now when they (The wise men from the east) had departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream , saying , “Arise , take the young Child and His mother , flee to Egypt , and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.”

When he arose he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt , and was there until the death of Herod , that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet , saying , “Out of Egypt I called My Son “. (MT 2:13-15)

The Holy Family in Bethlehem:-

After St. Joseph had received the order from the angel of God to take the young Child, Jesus Christ, and His mother to flee to Egypt, he took them together with Salome, the midwife, and stayed for a while in a grotto, known to the arabs as “Magharat-El-Sayyidah”, which is situated south east of The Basilica of The Nativity.

The Holy Family in The land of The Philistines:-

The Holy Family went first to the ancient philistine city and seaport of Ashkelon on the Mediterranean Sea, where Samson killed thirty of their men (Jud 14:19). From there, they proceeded in an almost easterly direction to Hebron. Then they went to Gaza about 40 kilometers to the western direction, where there is the site of the ancient canaanite stronghold of Gaza, By taking the route which runs parallel to the shore of the sea, they would have crossed, in two hours, the valley of Gaza. After a day journey from Gaza. The Holy Family arrived the ancient

township of Jenysos. To-day, this village is known as Khan Yunis which is a part of the Gaza Strip.

By walking continually on the route, they would have arrived Raphia (Rafah), the frontier town between the Gaza Strip and the province of Egypt. Raphia which had been the battleground of the contending forces of Ptolemy IV and Antiochus The Great in 217B.C, was conquered by Alexander Jannaeus, the Maccabee and annexed to Judea. It was restored again, however, to Egypt by Gabinus.

Continuing another 44 kilometers, along the caravan- route, about two days of travelling, The Holy Family crossed a stream, the valley of Al-Arish, which at all times formed the natural boundary between Egypt and Palestine.

The Holy Family in the land of Egypt:-

A little further on, The Holy Family would have arrived at the city of Rhinocolura, the present Al-Arish.

The first town, which would have been reached next, was Ostrakini, which has disappeared, though there is a village called Straki, which is situated at the vicinity of Al-Arish. At the south-western end of the caravan-route from Judea to Egypt. There is the celebrated city of Pelusium (Al-Farama) sea-port and key to Egypt. The Greek monk Epiphanius (IVth cent.), as well as Bernard the wise (870A.D.), mention the tradition according to which The Holy Family visited this historical city.

The Holy Family in The Nile Delta:-

It was at the time when Gaius Turranius (7-4B.C.), was Roman Prefect of Egypt, that The Holy Family crossed the narrow isthmus at al-Quantara, to-day a small village along the Suez Canal. It was over this isthmus, which separates Lake Manzala from Lake Ballah, that the

ancient caravan-route from Judea to Egypt passed. This route had centuries before, been used by Abraham and Jacob and his family (Gen.12,16). In the steps of the patriarches, The Holy Family entered the province of Goshen, the present El-Sharkia Governorate.

The first town they visited, in the Nile Delta, was Bubastis (Tell Basta), 2 kilometers south of Zagazig. They were not well received in this town, therefore they went a day's journey further southwards, and reached the town of Bilbais, alongside the modern Ismailia Canal. To-day, there is only one coptic church at Bilbais, the church of St. George, in the north-eastern part of the town, about one kilometer from the main road.

The Holy Family continued northwards till they reached the town of Sebennytos (Samannud), on the west-side of the Damietta branch of the Nile. A local tradition in Samannud relates that the present church of Abba-Nub was built on the ruins of an ancient church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, which in turn, was built on the site where The Holy Family stayed.

Having crossed the Damietta branch of the Nile, The Holy Family travelled westwards till they reached to a place where the present town of Sakha, situated about two kilometers south of Kafr-al-Shaikh. In this place Jesus put his foot upon a stone, and the mark of the sole of his foot remained upon the stone, and the place became known as Bikha Isous in coptic, that is to say, the foot print of Jesus. This stone was found about 1986 A.D. while they were digging around the church.

After Bikha Isous, The Holy Family travelled westwards and crossed the Rosetta branch of the Nile. Continuing their journey, they saw from afar the Desert of Scetis (The Wadi-Al-Natrun), and Jesus blessed it. The town which is nearest to the desert of scetis is Terenouti

(Al-Tarrana), about 40 kilometers from the Monastery of St. Macarius.

The Holy Family in The present Cairo:-

Continuing their journey southwards, the Holy Family crossed the river Nile until they reached the city of On, the Biblical Beth-Shams (Heliopolis), near Matariyah, the modern suburb of Cairo.

From On The Holy Family, went to a locality, where the church of the Blessed Virgin in the Harat Zuwaila of Cairo, now stands, passing through the suburb of Zaitoon, the nearest place to On. The Virgin Mary appeared for the multitudes in several shapes upon her church in Zaitoon, for several months from April 2, 1968. Harat Zuwaila is situated in the north-eastern district of Cairo. Annexed to the church is a convent of nuns. The nuns relate the tradition that, when The Holy Family rested here, Jesus blessed the water of the well and the Blessed Virgin drank from it. This well is situated in the floor before the southern sanctuary of the lower church, and the water is still used for healing the sick.

Continuing southwards, The Holy Family passed the fortress of Babylon, which commanded the route of Upper Egypt, where they halted on their return to Palestine.

Twelve kilometers south of Cairo, at Maadi, on the bank of the Nile, there is the church of the Blessed Virgin with its three cupolas. From Maadi The Holy Family took a sailing boat further southwards along the Nile.

The Holy Family in Upper Egypt:-

Twelve kilometers south-west of Maghagha, there is the village of Ishnin Al-Nasarah. In former times, there were many churches in Ishnin as there were days in the year. A local oral tradition relates that the waters of the well, about

80 meters north of the church of St. George, was blessed by Jesus, when The Holy Family passed through this village, on their way to Baysus (Dair Al-Ganus), about seven kilometers west of Ishnin. The sacred well of Dair Al-Ganus is situated at the western end of the south aisle of the church of the Blessed Virgin.

Ten kilometers in a southerly direction, on the edge of the desert, there is the ancient city of Oxyrhynchus, the present town of Al-Bahnasa.

To-day, Al-Bahnasa possesses only one church and this is dedicated to St. Theodore.

Near the ancient Cynopolis, the present village of Al-Kais, The Holy Family took a boat to travel southwards. Thirty five kilometers onwards they passed the Gabal Al-Tair, which is almost opposite Samalut and Bayahu. When the Holy Family passed this mountain, a large rock was about to fall on the boat, and The Blessed Virgin was very frightened. Jesus, however, extended his hand and prevented the rock from falling, and the imprint of his hand remained on the rock. When Almeric king of Jerusalem (1162-1173 A.D.), invaded Upper Egypt, they cut away the piece of the rock, and took it back with them to Syria in 1168 A.D. The church of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Gabal Al-Tair was built in commemoration of the visit of the Holy Family.

From Gabal Al-Tair, The Holy Family sailed southwards, passing on their way first the port of Khoufou, the present Minya, then the rock temple of the goddess Pekhet, called by the Greeks Speos Artemidos, on the site of which is the present village of Bani Hassan Ash-Shuruq. Finally, they passed the Temple of Ramses II, on the ruins of which the Roman Emperor Hadrian built the town of Antinoupolis, in 130 A.D. This site is occupied by the present village of the Shaikh Abadah.

Opposite the ruins of Antinoupolis there is the town of Ar-Roda, which is built on the site where the Holy Family disembarked, in order to proceed to the famous city of Khmunu, the Hermopolis Magna of the Greeks, at present the village of Al-Ashmunain. The ruins of the Basilica of Hermopolis Magna are situated just outside the village of Al-Ashmunain. About ten kilometers southwards, The Holy Family stayed for few days in Manlau, the present town of Mallawi. There are numerous coptic churches in this town and two are dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.

Two days further travelling in a southerly direction brought the Holy Family to the town of Kenis, (Nikyas, Funkus) the present Dairut Al-Sharif. The inhabitants of this town were very charitable, and the Holy Family remained there for several days, and Jesus wrought innumerable miracles in that place, and all those who had diseases or afflictions came to Him with faith to be healed. Many people believed in Him, and the idols in the town were broken up and smashed to pieces. From there, the Holy Family travelled via Pepleu, the present Beblaw, to the town of Sanabo.

Thereupon, the Holy Family entered the city of Cusae or Qusquam, nowadays the town of Al-Qusia. The priests of the idols, who were a hundred in number pursued the Holy Family with rods and axes in order to strike them. Thereupon the Holy Family left the town, and after they had travelled a little distance, Jesus turned and cursed the town and its inhabitants, the Holy Family went on a short distance, about six kilometers west of the town and rested for a while in the locality of the present town of Meir. Not far away, about 8 kilometers south of Meir, the Holy Family discovered a well. There, the Holy Family sojourned for six months in a certain house. This holy place, blessed on account of the Holy Family's presence in it, was dedicated

to the Blessed Virgin, and is known as the Dair Al-Muharraq.

According to the tradition, the church of the Blessed Virgin at the Dair Al-Muharraq was the first church built in Egypt.

According to the local tradition, the southern-most place visited by the Holy Family was ten kilometers south-west of the ancient Lycopolis (Asyut), at Establ Antar, a mountain range rising west of Asyut. The Holy Family stayed there in the large rock-tombs of the IXth to the XIIth Dynasty. The church of the Blessed Virgin at Dair al-Adra is situated east of the cave in which the Holy Family rested. From Asyut, the Holy Family returned to the site of the present Dair al-Muharraq.

The Return of The Holy Family:-

On their return, the Holy Family lodged in a cave, which is to-day situated beneath the church of St. Sergius, in old Cairo, the ancient Babylon of Egypt. This cave of the Holy Family was a site which was included in the itineraries of mediaeval pilgrims to the Holy Land.

From Babylon, the Holy Family continued their way northwards, stopping again at On, near the site of the present al-Matariyah. Here they bathed Jesus, and the well was blessed thereby. A sycamore tree, under which the Holy Family is supposed to have found shelter, still stands, in a small garden enclosed by a wall, just before the Catholic church of the Holy Family of Matariyah.

The next place the Holy Family visited on their return to Palestine, was al-Mahammah, or the place of bathing, the present Musturud. In the church of the Blessed Virgin at Musturud, about 3 kilometers west of Matariyah, on the western bank of the Ismailiyah Canal, there is to this day a well which was blessed by the Holy Family. The well is

situated at the north-east corner of the church, east of the cave where the Holy Family found shelter.

From al-Mahammah, the next halting place of the Holy Family was Leontopolis, known to-day as the ruins of Tall al-Yahudiyah, near Shebin El-Kanater. From there, the Holy Family returned to Palestine along the same route they had used to come to Egypt, passing through Bilbais and crossing the isthmus at al-Qantara, and then travelling on the caravan-route from Egypt to Palestine, along the Mediterranean coast.

According to a local tradition, the Holy Family rested for several days near Gaza, in a garden between the Gabal Muntar and Gaza.

When the Holy Family entered Palestine, Joseph heard: "That Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'" (Mat 2:22-23)

The flight of The Holy Family to Egypt is both a significant and a living tradition for the people of the land of the Pharaohs.(4,7,13,14)

**Places referred to on map
and their corresponding ancient names**

Ahnassiah	Herakleopolis
Ashmunain	Hermopolis Magna
Bahnasa	Oxyrhynchus
Beni Hassan	Speos Artemidos
Bikha Iysous	Sakha
Bilbais	Phelbes
Farama	Pelusium
Gebel't-Tair	Akhoris
Matariyah	Heliopolis
Mit Sammanud	Sebennytos
Musturud	al-Mahammah
Old Cairo	Babylon
Qusia	Cusae
Samalut	Cynopolis
Sanabu	Pepleu
Suez	Clysm
Tell al-Bastah	Bubastis
Terranah	Terenuthis
Wadi'n-Natrun	Scetis

THE ROUTE OF THE HOLY FAMILY IN EGYPT

