

Father Pishoy Kamel

In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

Aim

- ✠ To know about the life of this saint of this generation.
- ✠ To learn from his life.

Key verses

*“If you do not know, O fairest among women, follow in the footsteps of the flock”
(Song 1:8)*

Introduction:

1. **Birth:** 6 December 1931 – the town of Damanhur (Egypt)
2. **Name:** Samy Kamel.
3. **Primary School:** when he was 7 and spent 4 years
4. **High School:** he finished 5 years
5. **University:** Joint the **Faculty of Science** at the University of Alexandria at age of 16 and graduated with honours in June 1951 and became a teacher.
6. **Diploma:** Continued his education receiving 2 additional diplomas in **psychology** and **Education** (he was the top of his class)
7. **Degree:** Completed a degree in Philosophy
8. **Theological College:** in 1956 he graduated from the Alexandrian **Theological College** with first class honours and was elected as a Secretary General in the Association of the Servants of the Church.

Coptic Language and Church’s Fathers Study:

He loved the Coptic language and the knowledge of the Church’s Fathers.

Starting the Service:

He used to go to St Mary church (close to his uni) and a servant (Dr. Ragheb Abd El Noor) asked him to serve with them and he accepted in all love and simplicity.

Youssef Habib:

- This man was a celibate servant, had a very good job, and devoted himself to the service of God in the Church.
- He knew all the Coptic hymns
- He was a model of piety
- He had big influences on Samy Kamel.

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His Call to the Priesthood

- At the age of 28, extraordinary events would change the direction of Sami Kamel's life.
- He had been serving as a teacher with the Sunday school movement in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Alexandria.
- In November 1959, Samy Kamel took his Sunday school class to meet the new Coptic patriarch, H.H. Pope Kyrillos the Sixth, who was only consecrated few months before; on May 10, 1959.
- Before Samy's arrival, Pope Kyrillos had been discussing with **Fr. Mina Iskander** a proposed church to be built in the name of St George in Sporting, Alexandria. The Pope mentioned that they could not begin building in Sporting (where they had already purchased the land) until they had ordained a priest for it.
- When the Sunday school class entered the room, Fr. Mina pointed at Samy and in apparent spontaneity exclaimed, "**Here is the man who can be the spiritual father to the people in Sporting!**"
- Samy spoke briefly with H.H Pope Kyrillos, who made the sign of the cross over his head and said, "**God has given us the sign that you are to be a priest. I shall ordain you next Sunday.**"
- When Samy explained that he was not married, the Pope assured him that just as God inspired him to make this decision that He would also inspire Samy to find a bride.
- Samy spent the next few days at the monastery of St. Samuel, but confessed to his spiritual mentor that he did not receive a clear word from the Lord, so his mentor told him he must obey the Pope. Samy then asked his mentor how he could find a bride. He was directed to the sister of his two good friends from the Sunday school movement. Her name was **Angel Bassili**, and they got married the day before the start of the Advent Fast.
- One week later on **December 2, 1959**, Samy Kamel was ordained a priest and named Father Pishoy Kamel.

His Service in Establishing Churches

- ❖ Fr Pishoy became the first priest of the Church of St George, Sporting.
- ❖ He expanded the facilities at St George's church to include a nursery school, evangelic outreach, and teaching programs
- ❖ Fr Pishoy also established another **6** Churches in Alexandria – and they all started with no financial support and he never asked anyone for money – he always relied on God.

In the United States

- Fr Pishoy also travelled to America in **1969**, where he started the Church of St Mark.
- He found a church for sale in **Los Angeles** where there were no other Coptic Churches.
- The deposit of the church was around US\$25,000

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- The elders of the congregation opposed the idea because they feared they couldn't afford the church and that they would fall into debt.
- Fr Pishoy told them, "We have two weeks to get the money. If anyone finds a better offer let me have it. **"I will have the deposit"** Fr Pishoy said this confidently, but made the statement solely on his faith, for he owned nothing.
- Within two weeks, he collected the money with the help of the youth and he placed the money in his wallet and went to the bank.
- When he arrived to the bank, however, he realized that he had lost his wallet and wasn't able to find it anywhere.
- Fr Pishoy was distressed and began to pray with his friends.
- That evening, a man came asking for Fr Pishoy and asked if the priest had lost his wallet. Fr Pishoy had dropped his wallet when he was getting into the cab. The wallet and all the money were returned.
- This story teaches all of us and taught Fr Pishoy an important lesson that **"God is the One who takes care of church finances."**

The Life of Prayer

1. Prayer and the Bible

- ❖ Fr Pishoy was always concerned with how much the bible was related to and could be incorporated into daily life. He always attempted to integrate biblical passages into his life.
- ❖ Tasoni Angel tells an interesting story of a time when they were keeping money for people, as a kind of bank for them.
- ❖ One day someone came into their apartment and stole the money, and Tasoni was worried about how they would repay the money back to its owners.
- ❖ Fr Pishoy said that they shouldn't worry and rather it was a good opportunity to integrate a verse from the bible into real life. He chose **Philippians 4:6**: **"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."**
- ❖ Shortly after, Fr Pishoy received an anonymous donation to the Church that gave no specification of what it should be used for. This money was enough to repay everyone when they came for their money and there were 50 Egyptian pounds left over.
- ❖ One day their neighbour came to the apartment with cookies on the same plate that the money was stolen on. Tasoni was upset, but Fr Pishoy said that she should not. Rather he gave her another verse (**Hebrews 10:34**): **"And you cheerfully accepted the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves possessed something better and more lasting."**

2. The Jesus Prayer (the Arrow prayer)

Fr Pishoy was also very fond of the Jesus Prayer. This prayer had special appeal to him because it was rooted in the Scriptures;

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In the gospel of St Luke, the blind beggar called out from the streets, “**Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!**” and again when the ten lepers cried out, “**Jesus, Master! Have mercy on us!**” (Luke 17:12-13).

“The invocation of the holy name of Jesus is the simplest way of praying always. When the holy name is repeated often by a humble attentive heart, the prayer is not lost by heaping up empty phrases, but holds fast to the Word and brings forth fruit with patience.

3. Liturgical Prayer

- ❖ Fr Pishoy was a man of prayer, and always said that the main work of the priest was “to pray for his people and to offer the liturgical sacrifice for their sake.” (**Priest = Presviteros = intercessor**).
- ❖ He loved to pray the Divine Liturgy of St Basil every day and he continued to do so until he was overtaken by his illness. He often said he was conscious of the presence of St Basil at the liturgy.
- ❖ He believed it was the priest’s responsibility to teach his people the life of prayer and that “Failing to do so means teaching them nothing.”

His Love for Everyone

1. He was loved by the Muslim people and he loved them

- Because Fr Pishoy lived a life of such apparent beauty, it is still possible to find Muslims praying at his tomb in Alexandria long after his death.
- Several Muslims in Egypt and abroad claim that they were healed from their sicknesses through the prayers of Fr Pishoy.
- Later, when he was in hospital in London, he was a spiritual guide and mentor for many of the Arabic speaking sick at the hospital.

Story → The story of the Muslim security guard’s daughter marriage.

2. Love in the Face of Persecution

Discrimination against Coptic priests is frequent.

Like many other priests, when Fr Pishoy would walk through the streets dressed in his black robe, he became the object of spitting and other forms of battering. When he would return home with the spit on his clothing, Tasoni Angel would be very annoyed, but he would tell her that the spit was “the treasure of Christ.”

Story 1 → Got dragged with the car when he tried to save the kidnapped girl and not confessing on the people in the front of the police / detective.

Story 2 → There was one young lad in the neighbourhood who would shout out anti-Christian abuse and regularly pelt the approaching priest with orange peel. One day *Abouna* heard that this boy had broken his leg in an accident. The Christian priest went out of his way to visit the Muslim family. The parents were deeply apologetic for the boy’s behaviour. They were overwhelmed by Fr Pishoy’s kindness and by the gift of oranges for the sick child.

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Story 3→ Fr Pishoy had baptized many Muslims who converted to Christianity, and both he and those who he converted were treated very poorly.

- One of the Muslims that he converted decided that he had a monastic vocation. Abouna took him to a monastery and left him for several months so that he could test this vocation. When Fr Pishoy returned months later to check on him, an interesting thing happened.
- As Fr Pishoy was driving alone down the desert road, a ragged old desert dweller appeared suddenly as if out of the air. He flagged down Fr Pishoy and asked for a ride; he asked to be taken to a lonely spot on the road. Abouna agreed, but before they reached the selected place, the man told the priest that they had gone far enough. When the man left the car, he seemed to vanish into the desert, as quickly as he had appeared a few miles back.
- The next day in Alexandria, Fr Pishoy met with two brothers of the Muslim convert, and with tears in their eyes they confessed that they had planned to kill the priest on the loneliest part of the desert road, but they dared not carry out their plan because of the man with him.

His Love for the Cross (The Centre of our Lives)

Fr Pishoy believed that the Cross should be at the centre of all our lives and always emphasized the saving and healing powers of the Cross.

When preaching of the importance of the Cross in our lives, Fr Pishoy said, the world cannot be served from a place of power, but it can be served from the cross.

Fr Pishoy send a letter from Jerusalem to Tasoni Angel, he said, “The deepest influences on me were an altar, which stands at the base of the Cross, and then an icon of the Crucifixion. In the icon, Mary Magdalene is bent over our Lord’s feet kissing them. As for the Virgin mother of God, she was standing in silence. I felt as I gazed on all these how much Christ had endured for me. I found the church empty, so I stayed for a long time. I prayed earnestly that I might overcome my failings and indifference, and my inability to crucify myself and die with Christ. Then I asked He who had been buried here to remember His servants in Alexandria. I begged Christ’s pardon that who was crucified and scourged for me. I discovered a river flowing from the life of Jesus into my life.”

Cancer as His Cross “The disease of the Paradise”:

- ❖ On **1976**, Fr Pishoy was diagnosed with cancer. He accepted the cancer as both agony and joy.
- ❖ Joy because he was able to share in Christ’s sufferings by carrying his own cross (It was very significant for Fr Pishoy that the Copts use joyful hymns to celebrate the Feast of the Cross).

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- ❖ For him, the gladness overcame the distress, and he came to call cancer, “**the disease of Paradise.**”
- ❖ Even before he got sick with the cancer, he used to visit people with cancer and speak to them about heaven and the cross they were bearing, and that the illness was a mark from God that they were going to heaven quickly.

After suffering with this illness, Fr Pishoy wrote many sayings about the Cross.

- It is impossible to realize the power of the resurrection without the fellowship of the sufferings of the Cross
- He taught that it was essential to see yourself and every Christian as a cross-bearer because Christ said, “**If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.**”
- “The cross is not a theme for contemplation for a day, or even a month, or for any particular period, but the love for the cross is the whole life of the Christian.”

Fr Pishoy reposed in the Lord on **March 21, 1979**. He was only **48 years old**. His funeral was well attended by all that loved him and were affected by his life, both Muslim and Christian.

Practical life:

- What could be the Cross in our lives?
- How can we carry our Crosses and follow the Lord?

Story 1 (Love and Caring)

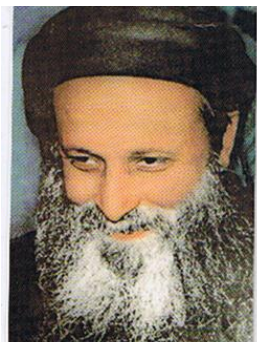
Staying with the family of the girl that wanted to convert to Islam

Story 2 (Listen to the Lord’s voice)

The Telephone company technician

Story 3 (Faith and humbleness)

The prayer of the sick and his confession on a priest from his children



May his prayers be with us all, and Glory is to God forever. Amen.