

**St. Mary & St. Abraam  
Coptic Orthodox Church  
Presents:**



**Anba Abraam, the Bishop of Fayoum:  
"The Friend of The Poor"  
(1829-1914 AD; Departed 9 June 1914)**

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## Anba Abraam, the Bishop of Fayoum (The Friend of The Poor)

### **Introduction:**

It is with the feeling of much blessings and great honor, we present to the friends of St. Mary & St. Abraam Coptic Orthodox Church, the story of St. Abraam the patron saint of our church. The people who moved to St. Louis, Missouri from Egypt in the early 1970's as they were trying to name their church in St. Louis, could not agree. Some wanted to name it St. Mary to honor the mother of God, the other group wanted to name the church after St. Abraam to honor our contemporary saint who was called the friend of the poor. The two sides agreed on one thing, naming the church after both saints, and a church was born which has two strong intercessors, patron saints: St. Mary & St. Abraam Coptic Orthodox Church of St. Louis, officially registered in 1974 in the state of Missouri, USA. We continue to enjoy the blessings of St. Mary & St. Abraam the Friend of the Poor as we will show you, our dear reader later.

### **A Brief Biography of St. Abraam:**

- Born Boulos (Paul) Ghobrial in 1829 AD, 1545 Martyrs in a small village called Delga, 16 Miles (27 Km.) south west of Malawi in the episcopate of Dyrout. His parents were righteous and loved the Lord.
- Sent to the village school ('Kouttab') and learned under teacher 'Mualeem' Roufail reading, writing, arithmetic, and the Holy Bible. He also learned hymnals, psalms, and praises under mualeem Ghobrial .He should excellent desire to learn with meekness, politeness and humility.
- At age 8, his mother had a serious illness that led to her departure. His father cared for him and he found in his love for the Lord Jesus Christ what filled his heart and comforted his soul.
- At age 15, he distinguished himself in his knowledge of the Holy Books and Church Hymnals, so the village priest recommended him to the then bishop of Dyrout, Anba Youssab (Joseph). Anba Youssab ordained him Deacon.
- Boulos loved solitude, so he entered the Monastery of St. Mary Known as "Al-Meharaq" in mount qusqam, El-Quosseiah, south of Assiut. This was when Arch-Priest Abd El-Malek was the head of Al-Meharaq monastery.

At the monastery, he worked hard while being quiet and for this reason, he was loved by his fellow monks. They nominated him to be elevated from novas (beginner under test) to be a monk. He was only 19 years of age. He became monk in 1848 AD and kept his name, Monk Boulos El-Maharaquey.

Monk Boulos had two distinct qualities:

Kindness with Self Control, and

### Amazing Love of Giving (Charily).

He was selected by Anba Yakovos (Jacob), the then bishop of Menya to be his assistant. He was extremely generous with the poor. After four years, he wanted to go back to the monastery. In another story, some complained about his generosity with the poor calling it waste. The bishop ordained him priest before letting him go back to his monastery, this was in 1863 AD..

At the monastery there was disagreement between some monks and their leader Arch-Priest Abd El-Malek. Fr. Boulos chose not to interfere, he kept quiet. The monks selected Fr. Boulos to become their leader in place of Fr. Abd El-Malek. He did two major things:

He Opened the doors of the monastery to the poor and needy, and

He attracted the youth of the region to the monastery, and in a short period he had more than 40 new monks join the monastery.

We here mention some of his disciples who became Priests/Bishops of good stature

1. Anba Markos (Bishop Mark), who became bishop of Essna and Luxor, was born in the village of tasa, governorate of Assiut in 1848 AD. Became monk on the hands of Fr. Boulos in 1586 AD. and ordained bishop in 1895 on he hands of then Pope Cyril V.
2. Arch-Priest Michael Al-Behairy, was a disciple of Fr. Boulos, and reached a high degree of righteousness and monastic life. The departed bishop Lucas, great bishop of Manflout wrote the story of Arch-Priest Michael Al-Behairy under the title: "Reaching the Goal, One of the Ultimate Achievements of Anba Abraam: Fr. Michael Al-Behairy"
3. Anba bouttros (Bishop Peter), Metropolitan of All Ethiopia,
4. Anba Mattaous (Bishop Matthew), bishop of Addis-Ababba,
5. Anba Lucas (Bishop Luke), Bishop of Akssoum,
6. Anba Markos (Bishop Mark), Bishop of Quodgom

As in Menya, the devil caused some to disapprove of Fr. Boulos love for the poor, calling it waste. Also they disapproved of the many youth coming to the monastery all the time. Our saint did not argue, when he was removed from the position of head of the monastery after 5 blessed years of service. He left for Cairo with four of his disciples, the four who later became bishops on Ethiopia.

They met with the then acting in place of patriarch ('Qaem-Maqaam'), Anba Markos, bishop of Behira. He understood the situation and sent them in peace to the monastery of St. Bishoy in Wady El-Natroun. They stayed in this monastery for a short period and moved to the monastery of El-

Baramous (named after the Roman Princes, turned monks St. Maximus and Domaduous, 7 mile away) in 1861 AD.

At El-Baramous monastery they met Fr. Youhanna El-Nassekh (Fr. John the Scribe). Fr. Youhanna was known in his time for scribing (writing by hand) church books which were used to furnish church books. He later became Pope Cyril V. Fr. Youhanna received them with extreme affection, and gave them 'Kallaly' places for the residence of monk.

Fr. Boulos and his 4 companions spent most of their time in worship and studying the Holy Books. However, Fr. Boulos did not stop his love for the poor, He shared his food and cloths with the Bedouins ('Al-Erban') who lived in the desert surrounding the monastery.

In 1881 AD, when John Kama, then Emperor of Ethiopia asked Pope Cyril V to ordain a Metropolitan and 3 Bishops for his country, the Pope asked the advise of Fr. Boulos. Fr. Boulos nominated his 4 companions, and they were ordained as explained above. As for himself, he refused to accept any high position..

At the same time, Anba Isaac the then bishop of Fayoum and Guiza departed. The four disciples of Fr. Boulos begged their spiritual father and asked the pope to ordain him bishop of Fayoum and Guiza. The people of this episcopate were delighted to nominate him and have him as their bishop which also took place in 1881 AD.

During his time as bishop of Fayoum, 1881 - 1914 AD. The episcopate became a place of rest and comfort for the poor and rich alike.

When Khdev (king) of Egypt, Tawfik, visited Fayoum, the administrator of Fayoum made a big dinner reception for the Khdev of Egypt. Anba Abraam walked over to the place, did not ride as was the custom. He sat at the table near the Khdev, and ate only salad. When the Khdev noticed that he ate only salad, he asked him the reason. Anba Abraam replied that it was Friday, a day of fasting for Copts. The Khdev asked that they bring some fruits for Anba Abraam. At the railway station, Anba Abraam was there to pay farewell to the Khdev. Khdev Tawfik shook his hand warmly and commented: 'Enta Ragel Mabrook' (You are a Holy Man!)

The rulers, the heads of departments, and even the workers in many government offices, enjoyed visiting. The episcopate, simple and modest as it was, became their place of rest! The nice Aroma of Christ in him, reached even the diplomatic corp. When the British Viceroy (Special Representative of England to Egypt) wanted to see him, the head of the region and the leaders of the Copts of Fayoum were embarrassed because the building of the residence of the bishop was old and the furniture was very modest and in bad shape. But when they saw how the Viceroy respected him and kissed the cross in his hand and his hands, they were all impressed.

In 1898, when the administrator of Fayoum, Mr. Mohammed Noohy was transferred from Fayoum to Quina, and in the first reception to welcome him to Quina, most of the talk in the reception was about Anba Abraam, His wonders, and His many Virtues. This is according to Mr. Wassef Boctor Beshara, one of the famous residents of Quina at the time. The reason this story is so amazing is because Mr. Noohy was a Moslem Egyptian.

In 1902, Anba Abraam made a journey to southern Egypt (Saeed) with his disciple Anba Mattaus, the bishop of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. They visited most of the major cities of Saeed from Fayoum to Luxor. On their return, the administrator of the region of Fayoum and other government representatives joined the Coptic congregation in receiving them at the railway stations, which was very unusual for government representatives to welcome returning home clergy, but this was Anba Abraam.

In 1893, Anba Abraam had bad soars in one of his legs. The doctors who examined him recommended amputation. He smiled and said: "It is not God's will for this leg which serves him to be cut. God will make their effort fail (referring to the doctors), I put my trust in him!" After two months, his leg was completely healed, and he offered a special prayer of thanksgiving. The Church was full beyond capacity with parishioners carrying branches of palm trees and olive branches, waving and singing with great joy and happiness for the safety of their father.

One time, some rich people of Fayoum bought furniture for his reception room, bed room, and kitchen and brought it over. He ordered his deputy to put it in storage. When a woman approached him about her inability to buy the furniture needed for the wedding of her daughter, he gave her everything. The people complained to the pope, pope Cyril V..

The people of Fayoum also, collected funds to build a new Church for the episcopate and a new residence for the bishop. They gave him the money. He gave it to the needy each according to his need. Some of the people of Fayoum complained to the pope once more.

Pope Cyril V sent for him. Anba Abraam went to see the pope without delay. It was afternoon, he walked in, the shutters were closed. There was a beam of light that went through a pinhole in the shutter. Anba Abraam was then very old, he mistook the light beam for a laundry robe, it was a common practice to have a laundry robe for hanging cloths. He threw his 'Faragia' Overcoat on the beam. The Faragia stayed there. The pope was dumbfounded, he greeted him, inquired about his health, asked his blessings and prayers and did not even discuss the reason for the meeting. Later on, pope Cyril V gave Anba Abraam money from the patriarchate to pay for the projects at his episcopate. When the people of Fayoum went to see the pope complaining that nothing changed, the pope told them that he could not argue with the power of God in Anba Abraam and told them all that happened in front of his own eyes.

He spent 33 years as bishop. he was visited by people from all over Egypt and Europe who came to see a saint on earth in those days. He had a life of intimate communion with our Lord Jesus Christ and his saints. He knew the Holy Books and enjoyed the liturgy with all the hymnals and praises very intimately, and he lived a life of extreme monasticism even when he was close to death, at age 85. He chose poverty, and was extremely generous, loving, and kind to the poor, 'the Lord's Brethren'. He healed the sick and raised the dead as we will detail in a future article about his wonders and miracles. He was bed ridden for one month, and a multitude of people went to see him and inquire about his health, and receive his blessings in his illness especially when they learned that he refused to be seen by any physician. He informed those who were close to him that he was going away to be with the Lord Jesus Christ.

On June 9, 1914 AD, Baouna 3, 1630 Martyrs and after sunset, Anba Abraam the Bishop of Fayoum, the Friend of the Poor departed to heavenly Jerusalem. More than 10,000 people came to say their final good bye. According to another estimate more than 25,000 people Christians and Moslems alike came to say good bye. He is buried in the Church of the Monastery of Azaab in Fayoum to this day.

In 1964, 50 years after his departure according to Church tradition of waiting 50 years before canonizing a saint (declaring a departed person a saint), the Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church declared unanimously the Sainthood of Anba Abraam the Departed Bishop of Fayoum based on first hand stories proven by many witnesses: Stories of his piety, wonders, and miracles. This happened when pope Kyrillos (Cyril) VI was pope and patriarch. The name of Anba Abraam is mentioned in the congregation of the saints which is recited before the profession in the liturgy. God willing, we will publish some of the wonders and miracles of Anba Abraam in the very near future. May the Lord grant us the benefits of his prayers and intercessions. Glory be to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. One God. Amen.

### **Closing:**

The construction of the new Church building of St. Mary & St. Abraam Coptic Orthodox Church of St. Louis is in itself a miracle, through the intercessions of St. Mary & St. Abraam. For 15 years, the small congregation (30 families) held church meetings in a converted garage. We were split three ways. One group wanted to stay in the converted garage forever, one group wanted to build a new church, and one group wanted to buy some existing church building to avoid the many hassles of going through a major project.

In mid 1993, we were approached by a general contractor who was willing to negotiate a much more reasonable price, and two banks which were willing to lend the church money for construction. One of the two banks told the church council six years earlier that they could not approve a construction loan to a church.

By October 1994, the building was completed, and was consecrated by no less than His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark. The 117

Pope and Patriot of our Coptic Church. Many of us see the completion of this project as a miracle in itself.

For the miracle to be completed, we need to pay \$500,000 mortgage loan, which is the balance of the \$750,000 cost of the building project. We need your prayers, and generous contributions. Please send your tax deductible contribution to:

Church Building Payment Fund  
St. Mary & St. Abraam  
Coptic Orthodox Church  
1843 Ross Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63146  
(314) 434-0531

Please call or write. We really would like to hear from you. Also remember to pray continuously and rejoice always. A prayer of thanksgiving is always appropriate (In all conditions, concerning every condition, and upon all conditions). Pray for others before you pray for yourself, ask for spiritual gifts before you ask for material gifts. Follow the example of Anba Abraam and show more love for the poor. Praises are the highest level of prayer, don't miss the praise (Tasbeha) services of your Church. God Bless You and Yours.

**Doxology for Anba Abraam, Bishop of Fayoum:**

The lamp that lights  
Fayoum and all Egypt  
For His wonders and miracles  
    and his love for Christ  
    The one with crown of jewels  
    The friend of the anchorites  
    The friend of the righteous and prophets  
Who followed our Lord Christ  
He is Anba Abraam  
The Bishop of Fayoum  
The true shepherd  
The teacher of virtues  
    David taught us in truth  
    That blessed are those  
    Who love the meek and poor  
    The Lord will save their souls  
Like our Father Abrahaam  
The Father of Issac and Jacob  
You loved to show mercy  
And completed all commandments  
    You were used to witness to the truth  
    You were used to eat with the poor  
    With great humility  
    You loved your sheep  
The lovers of material things  
Sought new buildings  
But you built in heaven  
Heavenly new places  
    How many are your wonders  
    You healed the sick  
    You prophecied about great things  
    You cast out the Devils  
You became an example  
With your pure example  
With love and mercy  
And witness to the truth  
    Ask the Lord on our behalf  
    Our father anba Abraam  
    The Bishop of Fayoum  
    So He may forgive us our sins.

**Praises “Tasbeeh”:**

Khen Ephran., em-eviot, nemb epsheri, nemb ebnevma thouav . tetrias en omosios. Axios, Axios, Axios, te-agia maria ti parthenos.

Axios Axios, Axios, ava abraam bi-episkopos

**Meaning:**

In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God Amen. Worthy Worthy Worthy St. Mary the Pure Virgin. Worthy Worthy Worthy St. Abraam the Bishop.

"Halleluia Vai Be pi. eheo itah, epshoic samiov. Maren theleel enten enouv emoon enkhiff. Oh epshoic eak-eh nahmeen, Oh epchoic ak eh soteen nenmoit. Evesmarout enge vi ethnio khenevran, eme-epchoic. Allelluia"

**Meaning:**

This is the Day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Lord Save us, Lord ease our way. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Halleluiah.

This comes from Psalm 118 and is sang in Arabic, Coptic, or English in Church Liturgy

**Song:**

This Is the Day, This Is the Day, This Is the Day The Lord Has Made, The Lord Has Made. Let Us Rejoice, Let Us Rejoice and be Glad In It and be Glad In It.

Glory Always be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit  
Now and Forever. Amen

Please call or write. We really would like to hear from you. Also remember to **pray continuously and rejoice always**. A prayer of thanksgiving is always appropriate (In all conditions, concerning every condition, and upon all conditions). Pray for others before you pray for yourself, ask for spiritual gifts before you ask for material gifts. Follow the example of Anba Abraam and show more love for the poor. Praises are the highest level of prayer, don't miss the praise (Tasbeha) services of your Church. God Bless You and Yours.



**His Holiness Pope Shenouda III  
117th Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch  
of the See of St. Mark (1971- )  
Church Dedication and Altar Consecration, Oct. 1, 1994  
St. Mary & St. Abraam Coptic Orthodox Church**

**The Church Needs Your Help in Paying the Bank Loan . Please send Tax Deductible  
Contributions to: Church Building Payment Fund**

**St. Mary & St. Abraam  
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St. Louis, MO 63146**



**St. Mary & St. Abraam Coptic Orthodox  
Church, St. Louis, MO 63146, USA  
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**This publication is the fifth in a series:**

- 1) Brief Commentary on the Book of Revelation**
- 2) Essays for Orthodox Youth,**
- 3) Rituals, Signs, and Symbols**
- 4) Anba Abraam, The Bishop of Fayoum**
- 5) Anba Abraam, The Bishop of Fayoum:  
Part II: Wonders and Miracles**

**We are trying to cover various topics for the English speaking members of our congregations in their language. All donations go to paying a loan for church building project for the Coptic Orthodox congregation in St. Louis. Through your prayers and financial support, we were able to get the building completed but we still owe the bank \$500,000. All donations are tax deductible. And more important, "The Lord Loves a Cheerful Giver" May the Lord use this publication for the Glory of His Wonderful Name. Please call or Write if you need more help in understanding our Christian faith.**

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