

Subj: **Our Fathers the Anchorites by H.H. Pope Shenouda III**  
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From:  
To: [Waziz  
arbible@yahoogroups.com](mailto:arbible@yahoogroups.com)

**Coptic Anchorites**  
**Our Fathers the Anchorites by H.H. Pope**  
**Shenouda III**  
**Our Fathers the Anchorites**

**The greatness of the anchorites:**

When the great Abba Makarius returned back to his monastery, after seeing two of the anchorites in the wilderness, he said to his disciples, I am not a monk, but I have seen monks.

**Preface**

An anchorite stands for one who has renounced all worldly concerns in order to live in unity with God.

He renounced all worldly enjoyment in order to have the Lord as his only enjoyment. Behold, who can report an anchorites biography, or who can give an account of one day of his life? We can merely ramble around the outer frame of his life.

How did he start his journey? And who had seen him and wrote about him? Nevertheless his spiritual life and his relationship with God is considered the holy of the holies.

Since then, I started reading the manuscripts that have sited the biographies of the anchorites and were kept in the Syrian Monastery, as well as the writings of St. Jerome and other fathers, along with the synaxarium and more other books.

I preferred not to relate the biography of each one apart, but I chose to extract some information about each of them, in order to portray a general picture for the anchorites.

And while I present this book to the dear reader, I only submit before him a simplified idea about the lives of those who lived as angels. Our blessed church honors them much, and many churches carry some of their names.

Most of them began their lives as monks. And some others went straight to journeying on, like Abba Paul and St. Mary the Coptic.

And now, in order to present some phases of their lives I am going to submit the following pages:

***Pope Shenouda III***

## Who are the Anchorites?

Some people think that the anchorites are spirits who can fly from place to place! They penetrate the churches while they are closed in order to pray without being revealed by others! The fact is quite different.

Then, who are the anchorites?

\*They are human beings as we are. They eat, drink, and may get sick and suffer pain and bodily ailments.

\*Nevertheless, they are hermits who lead a life of great corporal austerity.

\*They have lived in the inner wilderness wandering about in unexplored regions. Many decades might have turned without their seeing a mans face.

\*Some of them were lost in the wilderness without being discovered.

\*Some of the anchorites with whom we are acquainted were approached by someone sent by the Lord to learn all about the Anchorites biography in order to site it and present it to the church.

Most probably that meeting came near the anchorites death and the Lords messenger used to shroud and bury him.

They are human beings with flesh bodies that hunger and thirst and even fall sick.

We are told that Abba Paul the first Anchorite used to eat daily half a loaf of bread which a crow used to bring to him. We are also told that St. Onuphrius had had a palm tree that provided him with dates to eat. We also learn that Abba Pigimi the Anchorite and Abba Moussa the Anchorite who used to feed on the weeds of the mountain. They all used to drink from the water of the available springs or wells of the mountains.

Likewise we learn that Abba Timothy the Anchorite was taken ill with a liver ulcer and the Lords angel cured him. At the end of Abba Onuphrius life we also read about his suffering of a fever and red skin.

Therefore it is not true that the anchorites are mere spirits.

## The Most Famous Anchorites

Anchorites are many, but we are going to quote only those who are cited in the synaxarium:

1-Abba Paul the Anchorite whose memory the church celebrates on the 2nd day of Amsheer.

2-Abba Onuphrius (Abba Nofer) the Anchorite whose memory the church celebrates on the 16th day of Baona.

3-Abba Karas the Anchorite whose memory the church celebrates on the 8th day of Abib.

4-Abba Pigimi the Anchorite whose memory the church celebrates on the 11th day of Kiahk.

5-Abba Misael the Anchorite whose memory the church celebrates on the 13th day of Kiahk.

6-Abba Hermina the Anchorite whose memory the church celebrates on the 2nd day of Kiahk.

7-Abba Hedra the Anchorite of Aswan whose memory the church celebrates on the 12th day of Kiahk.

8-Abba Olaghi the Anchorite whose memory the church celebrates on the 10th day of Abib.

9-Abba Elisa the Anchorite whose memory the church celebrates on the 17th day of Kiahk.

10-Abba Timothy the Anchorite whose memory the church celebrates on the 23rd day of Kiahk.

11-Abba Pasantaos the Anchorite whose memory the church celebrates on the 7th day of Mesra.

12-Abba Latson the Anchorite whose memory the church celebrates on the 16th day of Baona.

13-Saint Mariam the Coptic Anchorite whose memory the church celebrates on the 6th day of Baramoda.

And there are more Anchorites, among whom are:

\*Abba Ghalion the Anchorite

\*Abba Balamon the Anchorite

\*Abba Yousab the Anchorite

\*Abba Ezekiel the Anchorite

\*Abba Keriakos the Anchorite

\*Abba Silas the Anchorite

\*Saint Anasimon the Anchorite queen

\* Two Anchorites witnessed by Abba Makarious the Great

\*Four Anchorites witnessed by Abba Makar the Writer

\*Anchorites witnessed by Abba Bektor the Writer

\*Anchorites witnessed by Abba Bebnouda during his journey to meet St. Onuphrius The Anchorite.

\*More unpopular or obscure anchorites.

Some writers of the anchorites biographies were called Anchorites i.e.:

\*Abba Bebnouda the Anchorite who met with St. Onuphrius the Anchorite

\*Abba Zosima the Anchorite who met with St. Mariam the Coptic Anchorite

### **Journeying with respect to the Anchorites**

We are going to quote some journeys to illustrate:

1-The long distance covered by the Saints to communicate with the anchorites, so as to show how deep the Anchorites had penetrated into the inner wilderness.

2-The divine arrangement for the meeting between the anchorite and the Lords messenger.

3-The divine grace through which the Anchorite revealed the identity of the Lords messenger.

\*We will start by presenting the meeting of Abba Pepnouda with Abba Onuphrius the Anchorite.

\*And then the meeting of Abba Bemoua with Abba Karas the anchorite.

#### **Abba Pepnouda said:**

In his journey to meet with Abba Onuphrius the anchorite:

I considered within myself to go into the inner wilderness to see the brethren the Anchorites, Our Lord Jesus Christs servants (devotee).

I marched on for four days and four nights, during which I neither ate nor drank water. I didnt see anybody.

And I had taken with me a little of bread and water just sufficient for a few days. When the bread and water ran out I got afflicted and predicted my death. But I urged myself and resisted and kept walking more days without eating or drinking. Until I was overwhelmed by weariness, hunger, and thirst. I lost my strength and I collapsed. I stayed motionless on the ground as a perishable.

Then I saw a person approaching me and he touched my lips. I restored my strength and all my weariness, hunger, and thirst vanished. And when I saw this miracle which was accomplished by The Lords grace, I promptly rose up and headed into the wilderness. I marched four more days until I got tired and grew weak. I raised my hands towards heaven and prayed. Then I saw the person whom I had seen before. He approached me, touched my lips and my whole body, and he gave unto me strength more than the previous time. I rose up and stood upright. Then I marched on seventeen more days through the wilderness. Straightway I looked and saw a man in the distance. He was exceedingly terrifying. He was naked except for his long hair which covered his body like a garment. He was wrapped with weeds. When he came near me, I was scared and fled up on a pinnacle of the mountain, because I thought he was a fierce beast. He dropped himself to the foot of the mountain in which I had taken refuge. Then he raised his face towards me and said to me, Descend my brother Pepnouda and fear not, because I am a man like you and I live in solitude in this wilderness for the sake of The Lord.

I was astonished at his knowing my name and I felt sure that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit who declared my name to him. So, I descended and prostrated before him. Whence he said to me, Get up my boy because I am The Lords servant like you. Then I rose up and sat at his feet. I asked him about his name and his life. He said, My name is Onuphrius, and I have lived by myself in this mountain for sixty years praying day and night. I lived on dry weeds and dried dates, as beasts. Since I came here I have never seen the face of a man except yours today.

**Abba Pemwa said:**

Of his journey to meet Abba Karas the anchorite:

I went out of my church and marched into the wilderness feeling happy and joyful. I was singing hymns by myself, not knowing where to go. I journeyed for two days and on the third day I reached a cave with its door closed by a stone. I knocked at the door and said, Bless me my saintly father. A man answered me straightway saying, Welcome, Pemwa the lover of God, who was considered worthy to shroud St. Elaria the daughter of Zeinon the king. Come in, peace be with you. As soon as I entered, he stood up and after greeting one another, we sat down conversing about the Lords good deeds.

I asked him, Father, I wonder if there is in this mountain another saintly similar to you. He sighed and said, There is a saintly in the inner wilderness, and truthfully I tell you that the whole world is not worthy of his feet tread. I asked him about his name and he answered saying: Abba Karas.

I said to him, My Saintly father, what is your name and how long have you stayed in this place and have lived in this cave? And how did you manage to live?

He said, My name is Simon Elkalla, and I spent sixty years in this wilderness. I eat once every Saturday, a loaf of bread which I find thrown on the rock outside my cave. It suffices me until the next Saturday. Afterwards he blessed me before allowing me to leave.

Then I journeyed into the wilderness for three more days until I reached a cave. I knocked at the door saying, Bless me, my venerable father. I heard from within a joyful voice saying, Welcome Abba Pemwa the saintly of the Lord. Come in, peace be with you. I approached him and we greeted one another. I took his blessing and we sat conversing about the Lords good deeds. Then I said to him, I wonder my father if there is anybody who is similar to you in holiness in the wilderness. He sighed and beat his chest saying, Woe to me father there is a saintly father, who the whole world is not worthy of his feet tread. Through his prayers the world avoids the Lords wrath.

I asked him if his name was Abba Karas. And he replied saying, Who am I the earthly to be Abba Karas who is the friend of The Lords angels? Then I asked him about his name and how long did he stay in that wilderness and how could he manage to live there. He said to me, My name is Pamon and I have spent sixty-nine years in this place and I used to live on dates from a palm tree.

He blessed me and I asked him to pray on my behalf. He said to me, May the Lord, glory to Him, facilitate your steps and send you His angel to shelter you in all your ways.

When I left the cave I heard a great voice and I closed my eyes unconscious of what was going on. After a while I opened my eyes and I discovered that I was standing by the door of a cave. I knocked at the door saying, Bless me my holy father. He replied straightway saying, Welcome Abba Bemoua the Lords servant, who was worthy to shroud St. Elaria the daughter of Zeinon the righteous king. Come in, peace be with you.

I went in, greeted him, and received his blessings. I watched him, and saw that his eyes were sweet, the hair of his head and beard was like ice and his face was peaceful with the Lords grace. When I sat with him and began conversing of the Lords good deeds, I watched him raising his eyes towards heaven and he sighed deeply saying, A star has fallen now, a great star has departed from this world. He is Abba Shenouda chief of the solitaries of upper Egypt. It corresponded with the seventh of Abib and I kept the name, the date and the hour within my heart. I was amazed and astonished.

Then I asked him about his name and he said, The wretched Karas. Then I asked him saying, How long have you been here in this wilderness? He said, Fifty-seven years, and I spent it waiting for the current moment as you came and brought my departure with you.

### **How did they get involved in journeying?**

#### **I - Abba Paul The Anchorite**

How did he get inclined to journeying?

He was the first anchorite. There were no monasteries or monks during his era. It is said that his brother or one of his near relatives treated him unjustly concerning his inheritance; and while he was on his way to prosecute him he saw a dead man carried out on a bier. He was moved by that scene. Whence he resolved to renounce money, inheritance and all the worldly concerns. He went on foot until he found a grave at the outskirts of the city. And there he stayed for three days praying that God might guide him.

The Lord sent him an angel who carried him to a solitary place with a spring of sweet water. A crow used to provide him with half a loaf of bread every day.

#### **II - Abba Onuphrius**

Regarding Abba Onuphrius, he said:

My story began when I dwelt living together with a group of monks in a monastery. We were one hundred and four monks, in number. We used to eat together in a specific place once a day. The peace of God over flew us, while we glorified The Lord. I was, then, a young man, and was eager to learn how to minister the Lord and worship him through saintly people who, as angels, persevered in worshipping God.

Once upon a time I heard them praising the Anchorites who used to live in the wilderness. They said that Anchorites talk to The Lord personally as Elisa and St. John the Baptist of whom Jesus Christ had said, Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist. (Matt. 11:11) and that he lived in the wilderness for thirty years until he went preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. (Luke 3:3)

I was amazed and said to them, My saintly fathers, I wonder if there is anyone in the wilderness, who can surpass you in righteousness, in spite of the labor, and great vigilance and the good spiritual deeds you perform?

One of them answered me saying, Yes, my child there is a selected group of people who are righteous before God more than we are. Because we are gathered here entertaining each other and conversing everyday about the good deeds of The Lord and rejoicing in praying. If we hunger we can eat ready food, and if we thirst we find the necessary water at hand. And if we fall sick or weak many are ready to visit and comfort us. If an evil thought came across our hearts we find those who console us with the word of God. If we longed for a certain kind of food and asked some of the monks lovers, they would bring it for us to eat.

But the Anchorites who live in the wilderness, miss all these merits. If they get bored, they find no one to entertain them or speak to them about the good deeds of the Lord. If they hunger they find nothing to eat and if they thirst they do not find water to drink. If they get sick they find nobody to treat or care of them. In short, they find none even to speak to them. When they start journeying

they suffer through hunger and thirst and the devils warfare and temptation. The devil acknowledges the greatness of honor they have from the Lord due to their long-suffering, great struggle and labor, and their destination after death. The more they tolerate patiently the tribulations and afflictions, the more they enjoy the mercy of God who sends His angels to serve them... as is written in the book of Isaiah the prophet that, Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. (Is. 40:31) If they thirst He springs water for them from the rocks and makes the weeds taste sweet like honey in their mouths. If they encountered tribulations or were led into temptation by the enemy, then they would raise their hands toward heaven praying, His mercy would visit them rapidly and all wars against them would vanish for the sake of their straightforward hearts. And as it is written in Davids Psalms, Or the angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him (Ps. 34:7) and There is no want to those who fear Him and Those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing and The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are open to their cry... and deliver them out of all their troubles.

Whence I heard these words from the righteous fathers, who love the Lord, it tasted sweet as honey in my mouth. I discharged myself of all the thoughts, and I felt like my whole soul and body were transmitted to another mountain.

So, I rose up by night, took some bread enough for three or four days until I would reach a place assigned to me by the Lord. Then I left my brethren at night and headed towards the mountain, I saw a man rising in front of me and he was very luminous. I was terrified and decided to go back from where I had come from, but he approached me and said to me: Do not fear, I am the angel of the Lord who kept your company since your childhood. Gods mercy will visit you so far as you stick to Him.

Associated with the angel, I kept walking for almost six or seven miles until I saw a small cave. I approached it to see if there was someone in. When I knocked at the door and called as the monks custom saying, Bless me O father, a great saintly father came out to see me. He was handsome, with a smiling face. When I saw him I made a prostration before him. He raised me up and said to me, You are Onuphrius my fellow hermit. May God bless and support you to achieve what you had determined to do. Come in peace my friend. I entered and stayed with him a few days learning of him the way to God. And he taught me how to encounter the life in the wilderness and the wars of the devils and their fearful tricks.

When he saw that my mind was slightly enlightened and acknowledged my awareness of the seen and unseen wars, he said to me, Rise up to go with me into the inner wilderness where you will abide on your own and labor for the sake of God who called you to this wilderness and this journey.

He rose up and marched with me into the inner wilderness for four days until we reached a fortress with a palm tree planted near it. Then he said to me, This is the place which the Lord appointed to you to serve Him in it.

He stayed with me for a month during which he instructed me to the best work I would perform. Then we greeted each other, and I bid him farewell and he left.

Later I used to meet with him once a year until he departed and I shrouded and buried him in the place where he used to worship God.

Then I returned back to this place glorifying God on behalf of this saintly elderly.

### **III - Abba Pigimi the Anchorite**



The story of Abba Pigimi the Anchorite included:

That when he was ten years old he went to a monastery to live in. But he was told to go back to his parents to have their consent. Nevertheless he answered, You are my parents. So, he spent seven years among them learning the monastic rules. Since they saw him walking in the Lords commandments in contrite, patience, wisdom and meekness, they dressed him in the monastic garb. He spent twenty-four years among them without even looking up to see any of their faces.

After the departure of those elders, Abba Pigimi spent two years during which many came to have his blessings for what they had heard about his virtues. He rebuked himself saying, How can I act if the Lord visited me while I am here among these multitudes? Then he rose up and headed to the mountain in Shehat. He spent three days and three nights walking in the wilderness not knowing where to settle down. Meanwhile he ate and drank nothing for he had carried no bread or water other than a stick. He encountered the warfare of the devils who tried to frighten him but the Lord supported him against them.

After walking for two more days he reached a valley with palm trees, water and wild beasts. He rejoiced and settled down there where he lived in corporal austerity. He used to have one meal every week. It consisted of a handful of dried dates and some of the valleys water. Later he drank of the dew and exercised more tough fasting.

#### **IV - Abba Hedra The Anchorite**

Concerning Abba Hedras biography:

It is said that his family enforced him to marry when he was eighteen years of age. On his wedding night he pretended to be sick. And early in the morning on the following day he went to the church asking for Gods guidance. On leaving the church he saw a funeral of a man carried by his family to the grave. On meditation he said to himself, It is not the man who died, but it is me who died of this transient world.

He then went to a monastery where he dwelt. His family urged him to go back with them but he would not turn from his decision. He persevered in worship and corporal austerity. When the monasterys fathers saw his zeal in his spiritual life, they dressed him in the monastic garb. He was kept under the guidance of St. Abba Bimen.

Eight years later, he appealed to live in the wilderness. Abba Bimen went with him where they found a cave to dwell in it. He grew in virtues and austerity. A solitary person came once to visit him and when he saw his great toil he requested him to be less harsh on himself. He replied in contrite saying, All what I carry out is nothing compared with one of my many sins. The solitary was edified by his reply, and went telling his fellow solitaries who came to listen to his teachings.

When he realized that his celebrity spread, and many came to see him, he decided to escape to a place where he would not be known. His tutor agreed with him.

The place which the Lord chose for him was as far as three days distance. It was inhabited only by fierce beasts, insects, and lizards. The demons tried to frighten him with scary sights and appearances but he overcame them through the sign of the cross.

Once upon a time, when he returned to his cave he found a great dragon. He prayed saying, O Lord, if it is your will that this fierce beast dwells with me, so let it be according to Your will. Thus, God saved him from the dragon.



**V - Abba Ghalion the Anchorite**

But Abba Ghalion the Anchorites story, is different from all the preceding stories: He went to a monastery in the mount of Kalawoon, and dwelt there until he grew old. He had never went out of the door of the monasterys fortress, nor was he escorted by any of the monks except at the hours of prayers. None of the monasterys monks memorized the hymns as he did.

The antagonist enemy put up a plot for him and came to him at night while he was leaving his cell heading to the church for the midnight prayers.

He said to him, We are twelve anchorites who journey in the wilderness. One of us passed away and we cannot be less than twelve. Therefore we chose you to retain our perfect number, because you are a worshipper hermit who loves his brethren and renounced all worldly concerns and pleasures. Whence you are worthy to be among us... and then he vanished.

Late after the midnight prayers he quit the monastery without being recognized. He took nothing with him except a stick to lean upon.

He saw eleven characters of the devils soldiers dressed in monastic garbs. They welcomed and greeted him gladly. He followed them until mid-day. They reached a high mount overlooking the valley of the oases. It was a deserted area with no food or water nor any living creature. They sat, laughing, making fun of each other and saying joyfully, We have hunted tonight a good hunt...

Abba Ghalion said, I meditated on what I was about to encounter, and said to myself that those people were demons and not holy. I crossed myself with the sign of the cross and looked and saw none of them. I was left in the mount not knowing where to go nor how to act. I opened my mouth and started reciting the psalms. I looked backward and behold, I heard a voice. I was astonished especially because I saw three men reciting the 96th psalm, Sing to the Lord a new song... Their voices were angelic, and because I was familiar with the tune they were singing, so I joined them. Nevertheless I kept cautious lest the devil was carrying on another trick to destroy me. But I said in my heart that the devil never recites Davids psalms.

While I was meditating, the men approached me singing joyfully. Responding to them in the way they acted, we spent the whole night reading the psalms of David the prophet, until the morning. They didnt ask me about my concerns and so I didnt ask them about theirs.

Then we sat all together and I realized that they were monks from St. Shenouda monastery and who used to journey in the mountain. Then they said to me, We need you not to tell us about what you had encountered, because inspired by the Holy Spirit, we know of the enemys plots and tricks. You have to thank the beneficent God for his mercy.

Abba Ghalion added, I spent with them a whole year... and we discovered a spring of water at the foot of the mount.

**VI - Abba Misael the Anchorite**

Regarding the story of Abba Misael the Anchorite:

He was born of a very rich family. After his parents repentance, his mother conceived him in her old age. Whence they raised him in the fear of God.

He renounced the world and its wealth, and came to the monastery of mount Kalamon. He behaved in corporal austerity, purity and prayers, until his body grew dry as fire-wood, and his

limbs like the palm-leaves. Abba Isaac wept for him. But he consoled him with spiritual words and said to him, Dont weep. Then he told him of a vision he had seen in his dreams. He predicted that some people would come and take him.

His prophecy came true, and he was taken by spiritual soldiers. He dwelt with them. The following year he accompanied them to save the monastery from an unjust ruler who came to take by force the possession of the monks food.

He asked Abba Isaac the permission to return to his bishopric to restore the money which he had deposited before in order to build a church in the monastery on his name. This was accomplished, and Abba Isaac built a church for Abba Misael in the place he used to live in. He, together with his fellow spiritual people, attended the celebration of its consecration. It corresponded to the tenth day of the Coptic month Bashans.

Each of the anchorites has crossed a different route to journeying.

Some of them were carried to it by an angel as in the case of Abba Paul. Others admired the biography of the anchorites and thus got devoted to journeying like Abba Onuphrius. Others fulfilled the monastic rites and then longed for journeying as Abba Pigimi. Another was deceived by the devil who led him to the mountain, but the Lord sent to him someone to guide him, like Abba Ghalion.....

### **Writers of the Anchorites Biographies**

In order to present the anchorites biographies to the church, the Lord used to send someone to the anchorite near the end of his life to get acquainted to his biography and write it before burying him.

Whence, He sent Abba Anthony to Abba Paul the Anchorite to know his biography. He wrote it and buried him. And He sent Abba Bemwa to Abba Karas the Anchorite and he wrote his biography. Likewise Abba Serabion was sent to Abba Marcos Altermoki, Abba Bebnouda was sent to Abba Onnophrios the Anchorite and Abba Samuel was sent to Abba Mousa the Anchorite. They got acquainted with their biographies, wrote it and buried them. And there are some famous writers of the Anchorites biographies:

Of these, are Abba Boktor the writer, Abba Makar the writer who later on became a bishop, Abba Isaac the abbot of Abba Samuels monastery in the Kalamon, and other writers whose written biographies were gathered in a manuscript well known in the monasteries by the name of (The forty news). And it is known that St. Jerome wrote the biography of Abba Paul the Anchorite.

## **Questions about The Anchorites**

### **Their infallibility to sins:**

#### **1- Did the anchorites reach the stage of infallibility to sins? Are they liable to sin?**

Nobody is infallible to sins as long as he lives in the flesh on earth. The Lord is the only one who is without sin. The biographies of the anchorites tell us about the news of the falling of some of them and then their repentance.

An example of the anchorites who had fallen in sin, was Abba Mousa the Anchorite. After

spending thirty years in journeying that the beasts were tamed and submitted to him, the devil could deceive and entrap him more than once. Then he repented and the Lord sent Abba Samuel the confessor to him. He confessed to him and partook of the Holy Communion. Thus he departed as a repentant.

Likewise Abba Timothy the Anchorite who sinned at his youth. He grieved, wept, and mourned bitterly for his sin that his liver was infected by an ulcer, and an angel cured him; Then he spent his life in sanctity.

### **Clothing and Nakedness**

**2- Did the anchorites wear clothes?** Especially because their clothes were apt to be worn out through the decades they spent in wandering...

In the biography of Abba Makarius the Great, it is said that he saw two naked anchorites in the inner wilderness in the west towards Libya. Nevertheless it is an unusual case.

Abba Paul the first anchorite had tailored for himself a dress of palm fibers or palm leaves.

Likewise Abba Onuphrius the Anchorite has covered his nudity with his long hair.

Abba Pigimy tended to living naked as a phase of renouncing worldly possessions. But he turned back to reason saying to himself: How can I sit naked? And how can I dare pray to God in my nudism?

He remembered how the Lord God made tunics of skin to clothes Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:20). Likewise, the angel who proclaimed the Christ's resurrection, was clothed in a long white robe. (Matt. 28:3; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4; John 20:12). St. John the Baptist who lived in the wilderness was clothed with camels hair and with a leather belt around his waist (Mark 1:6).

Also, each one of the seraphim had six wings, with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew (Isaiah 6:2). Therefore Abba Pigimi covered his body with tree leaves. Thus, we conclude that either the Lord preserved the anchorites clothes from being worn out, or that they were clothed with palm leaves or fibers or even with animals skins. Nevertheless some anchorites could have stayed naked.

Regarding St. Mary the anchorite, we learn that she had hidden herself behind a rock when Abba Zosima approached her in the wilderness to have her blessings, and she asked him to give her his dress to cover her body.

### **3-Was their Number Limited?**

Are anchorites restricted to a certain limited number, that if they miss one of them by departure they should choose someone else to replace him and to keep their number fixed?

There is nothing that can justify the notion of the limited number especially because there was a probability that there were others.

See: <http://anchorites.tripod.com/copticanchorites/id9.html>

William Hanna