

The Consecration of the
Cathedral of St Macarius the Great
By His Holiness Pope Tawadros II
(Misrah 20, AM 1737 – August 26, AD 2021)

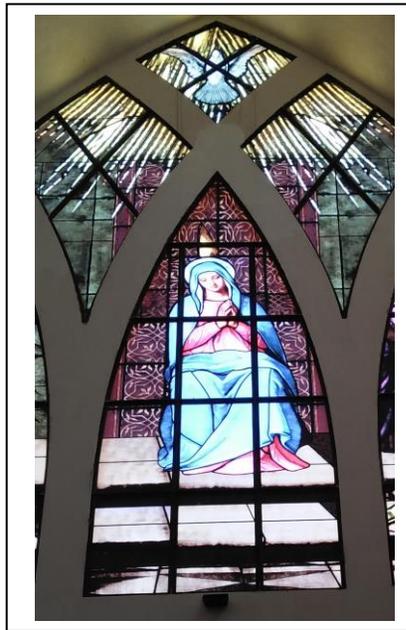


*For the first time in fourteen centuries, a cathedral is now consecrated in the name of **St Macarius the Great**, the founder of our monastery and the father of the desert of Scetis, in the presence of 15 Bishops of the Coptic Church, with some prominent Copts, our beloved monks and a number of the monastery's loved ones.*

“A blessed day is that of the consecration of this cathedral in the name of Saint Macarius the Great, father of the desert of Scetis... This, my brethren, is a day of joy: that we all, reverend bishops, priests, deacons, clergy and all the people, together with the monks of the monastery, participate in this happy occasion: the occasion of the consecration of this cathedral.”

THUS, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II began his speech on the occasion of the consecration of the cathedral of Saint Macarius the Great in his monastery in the desert of Scetis. On Thursday morning, the twenty-sixth of August AD 2021, His Holiness headed to the monastery of Saint Macarius the great, accompanied by an assembly of bishops of the Coptic Orthodox Church, to consecrate the new cathedral after the completion of its construction.

It was indeed a blessed and historic day. For on the thirteenth of February 2016, HG the late bishop Epiphanius, the abbot of the monastery, laid the foundation stone for this cathedral. Since then work had been continued on its construction until the building was completed by the grace of the Lord, ready for its consecration by Pope Tawadros II, which took place at the feast of commemoration of the return of the relics of St Macarius to his monastery, on the nineteenth of Misra / twenty-fifth of August.



His Holiness, Pope Tawadros, during his spiritual talk, not only did mention the dual purpose of establishing this cathedral, which is relatively far from the ancient monastery, for it will on one hand serve the visitors and give them the chance to pray in the desert, and on the other hand maintain the stillness of the ancient monastery and monk's cells, but the Pope also was inspired in his talk by both the time and place of the event: the time is the day of the consecration, the place is the new cathedral.

As for the consecration event, as a form of dedication, His Holiness related it with the sacrament of baptism, and referred to the three stages that the ritual prayer (of the service of the consecration) goes through: the first stage is taken from the dedication of Solomon's temple in the Old Testament, and is distinguished by the refrain, "Lord, have mercy." When a person is in the presence of God, he or she only asks for mercy and forgiveness. The second stage, which ends by making the sign of the cross on the altar, without anointing it with the holy *myron*, is distinguished by the refrain "Amen", where it points to the altar being the subject of our requests and supplications to God. During the third and final stage, the holy *myron* is poured on the altar, and also the altar is called by its name and its geographical place is specified, as if we were writing its birth certificate, or rather its baptism. And then the reply is neither "Lord, have mercy," nor "Amen," but "Alleluia," that indicates that this consecrated altar became a source of joy and rejoicing for everyone who approaches it with a spirit of worship, reverence and piety. This is the ultimate goal of all of our lives, whether we are monks or laity, to become joyful and rejoicing human beings with Christ who dwells in us.



As for the place, i.e. the cathedral, His Holiness was inspired from its appearance three jewels with which a Christian should adorn himself. The first jewel is spiritual beauty. The second is the purity of heart. The third is spiritual transparency. The Pope started his talk about the beauty of the cathedral and quickly moved on to the beauty of the soul. So the beauty of the soul is first of all for the joy and pleasure of man himself. The inner beauty of man is inevitably reflected on everything that surrounds him, thus he sees the world beautiful and luminous, because he walks in the fear of God and relish in His indescribable love, and so he sees what is around him, not with his physical eyes, but rather by his spiritual open eyes: “The royal daughter *is* all glorious within” (Psalm 45:13,NRSV).

As for the second jewel, which was inspired by the white color that characterizes the cathedral, it is purity. The white color is the color of light, and “God is light, dwells in the light, and the angels of light glorify Him” (*Theotokia of Monday* — the ninth piece),and we are the children of light. Light is a metaphor for the illumination and purity in which man lives, and we ask for this purity in the Psalm of Repentance: “Create in me a clean heart, O God. And renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Ps 51:10,NRSV).Our life is a relentless pursuit after acquiring

the pure heart; whenever we are walking along the path we get dirty, and that will make us troubled, until we clean or change our clothes. If this is what happens to worn-out clothes, how much more about the living hearts with which we appear before God?! Whenever you enter the church and you see its white color, pray saying: “Lord, give me a pure heart and a simple eye”. “If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light” (Matthew 6:22, NRSV).

Finally, His Holiness found in the transparent glass that distinguishes the walls of the church, the third jewel, which is the tenderness and sweetness of life, that is, the life of the man who speaks kind words, who keeps the secrets of his friends, who talks wisdom, and who behaves in a meek and simple attitude. We look at all this transparent glass, and we ask the Lord to make our souls transparent, not darkened by sin. It was said of the heavenly Jerusalem, the mother of us all (cf. Gal 4:26), the holy city that descends from heaven from God, that it is “pure gold, clear as glass” (Revelation 21:18, NRSV).



After the consecration prayers and the Divine Liturgy were over, His Holiness the Pope distributed souvenirs to the bishops and the guests. Then he went to open a new guest house, and shared an *Agape* meal with the monks and visitors. Before leaving, he distributed souvenirs to the monastery workers, one by one, concluding this blessed day with this tender fatherly gesture.