

## **MACARIUS III**

The 114th [patriarch](#) of the See of Saint Mark (1944-1945). He was born on 18 February 1872, at the town of al- Mahallah al-Kubra in the Gharbiyyah Province. He was named 'Abd-al-Masih. Later, at the early age of seventeen, he entered the monastery of DAYR [ANBA BISHOI](#) and was ordained priest. In 1895 [CYRIL V](#) appointed him private assistant and raised him to the rank of HEGUMENOS.

On 12 July 1897 he was consecrated [metropolitan](#) of Asyut, a position that he occupied for about forty-seven years, when he was elected to the throne of Saint Mark on 13 February 1944.

In Asyut he found that foreign missionaries had made strong inroads into the Coptic church. With remarkable zeal he set about revitalizing the debilitated community: building new churches, restoring old ones, and implementing a daring program of education. In 1900 he established the first Coptic school for boys, followed in 1904 by the first Coptic school for girls, run by a highly qualified English schoolmistress with an Egyptian, English, and French staff. He also set up more than thirty elementary schools for the poor throughout the province, as well as three charitable institutions and scores of [benevolent](#) societies and religious groups that were subsidized by the community council.

He put the council in charge of financial matters related to the day-to-day running and upkeep of the church and the other institutions, while he devoted his energies to the spiritual welfare of his people.

In 1920 Macarius drew up an ambitious plan of reform incorporating the following points:

1. setting up a theological [college](#) in one of the monasteries to provide the church with properly qualified clergy
2. establishing a [Supreme Council](#) to run all the Coptic [property](#) given

to the church

3. organizing ecclesiastical affairs under the direction of the pope and in collaboration with a group of bishops and spiritual leaders
4. forming an education committee at the patriarchate to supervise the teaching of the Coptic language and religious instruction
5. keeping an up-to-date register of poor families.

Such a program won the hearts of all the Copts in his parish. It also prompted the members of the [community council](#) of Asyut, some of whom were also members of the general council in the capital, to nominate [Metropolitan](#) Macarius as candidate for the patriarchate. This was in open defiance of the prohibition imposed by the church against the candidature of metropolitans to the papal seat.

The other bishops and abbots, however, who were opposed to the idea of any supervision exercised upon their finances by the community council, declared their unwillingness to cede any of their “sacred” rights. The Holy Synod issued a statement to the effect that the pope’s relegation of his powers to the [community council](#) was an act that broke church laws.

Unable to reconcile these two warring camps, the embittered [patriarch](#) withdrew to the monastery of Saint Antony (DAYR [ANBA ANTUNIYUS](#)) in the Eastern Desert. A few months later, at the request of some bishops and men of goodwill, he agreed to return to his seat, but not long afterward he died. Of the eighteen months that formed his patriarchate, Macarius III spent six months in retreat in the desert monastery as a result of this schism that prevented him from undertaking his long-hoped-for reform.

## **MOUNIR SHOUCRI**

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