

Coptic bishop SAMUEL (1920-1981)

He was born Sa'd 'Aziz on 8 December 1920, to a pious middle-class family. From his early youth, he associated himself with the Sunday School movement, where he became a staunch supporter known for his immense piety and unassuming humility, two qualities that he retained throughout his later distinguished career.

After his secondary education, he studied law at Cairo University, graduating in 1942. Later, he joined the Clerical College, where he obtained a diploma in divinity in 1944 while simultaneously working for the bachelor's degree at the American University in Cairo. In 1955, he was granted a scholarship by Princeton Theological Seminary, where he obtained a master's degree in religious education.

In 1944 he was called to serve in Ethiopia as a lecturer in the Theological Seminary at Addis Ababa. Here he combined a voluntary lectureship at the Teachers College with his official position, and helped to establish the Sunday School movement. Upon his return to Egypt in 1946, [Emperor Haile Selassie](#) decorated him with the order of the Star of Ethiopia.

At this point, he decided to take the monastic vows under the name of Makari at the hands of Abuna Mina, a well-known solitary in Old Cairo who later became CYRIL VI (1959-1971). He remained for three years with his mentor before moving to the Monastery of Saint Samuel in the Fayyum and later to the Monastery of Our Lady, known as DAYR AL-SURYAN in Wadi al-Natrun.

In 1954, Father Makari al-Suryani was commissioned by Pope Yusab II to go to Evanston, Illinois, together with Abuna Salib Suryal and Dr. Aziz S. [Atiya](#) as the first delegation of the Coptic church to the World Council of Churches. This proved to be an important milestone in his international career, for he became a permanent deputy of the Coptic church in several committees of the World Council.

From 1955 to 1962, Father Makari al-Suryani taught pastoral theology in the Clerical College, and he saw it move from its dilapidated old quarters at Mahmashah to a new modern establishment at Anba Ruways. With the foundation of the Higher Institute of [Coptic Studies](#) in 1954, he was chosen to lead its department of social studies. Later, he founded the Saint [Didymus](#) Institute for the Blind and equipped it with a specialized printing press where he published a magazine for the blind cantors of the community.

In 1959, he launched a major program called the Rural Diaconate for the service of Coptic families in isolated villages who had not received the sacrament of baptism and were without the slightest notion about their religion. He recruited a battalion of volunteers who were called upon from the nearest towns to go to those secluded hamlets in order to acquaint villagers with the rudiments of their faith. Movable altars to celebrate the liturgy and administer the sacrament of Holy Communion and baptism were used by itinerant priests.

When his old mentor Mina the Solitary became [Pope Cyril VI](#), one of his first acts was the elevation of a number of eminent monks to the rank of the episcopate. These included Father Makari al- Suryani, who became bishop of public, social, and ecumenical services. In this capacity, he fostered the Diaconate of the *Rif* (countryside) and sponsored social and educational movements in the church, notably the Sunday School movement and the [creation](#) of centers for the training of young men and women in the varied technical handicrafts.

He played an important part in the completion of the huge edifice of the new Saint Mark's Cathedral on the grounds of Anba Ruways. He worked hard with the Coptic communities overseas for the establishment of Coptic churches in Europe, America, and Australia. In his administrative capacity, he became instrumental in dealing with national problems, continuously moving between ministerial offices to heal wounds inflicted on the community by misguided bigots.

Beyond the Egyptian frontiers, he proved himself to be a force in ecumenical movements. As a permanent member of the [Central Committee](#) of the World Council of Churches, he participated in the solution of most religious disputes of his day and became an eloquent representative of his church in that universal forum.

On the African scene, he became vice-president of the All Africa Conference of Churches, of which he was a cofounder. He continued his vigorous service to the church and the whole of Coptic society, including both rich and poor, until his death, together with President Anwar al-Sadat, at the hand of assassins. In compliance with his will, his body was later buried beside his mentor, Cyril VI, in the new monastery of Abu Mna in the district of Mareotis.

GABRIEL ABDELSAYYED MAURICE AS'AD

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