

## ***MONASTERY OF THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL AT NAQLUN***

It is situated about 15 kilometers southwest of the city of al-Fayyum. Church historian **Abu al-Makarim/Abu Salih** (early 13th century) referred to two churches of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel there. In 1672, Johann Wansleben found the monastery completely ruined except for the Church of the Archangel Michael, which he admired because of its paintings.

The church was probably built in the ninth century and designed as a basilica with three aisles. Its eastern part features a *khurus*, main apse, and two lateral sanctuaries. The limestone Corinthian capitals of its columns were taken from older monuments.

In the 1990s, its wall paintings were conserved, and superimposed layers of wall paintings were discovered. The Coptic foundation text indicates that the church was renovated and decorated with murals during the reign of **Patriarch** Zacharias (1004-1032). Some of the wall paintings are unique, such as St. Peter standing in the apse among the [Apostles](#) and wearing the **bishop's** garb and a monk's cap. The text identifies him as [Archbishop](#) Petros, which shows that he represents both the Apostle and the martyr [patriarch](#) of [Alexandria](#).

In the narthex, [the Virgin](#) is depicted between the Archangels Gabriel and Michael, while unusually two doves appear behind her throne. Eighty-nine hermitages scattered in the valleys of Gabal al-Naqlun are cut in the rocky hills. Some of them were inhabited by hermits as early as the [fifth century](#) and continued to be in use until the 12th century. The texts, pottery, textiles, and murals discovered in Naqlun provide invaluable material for the study of **monasticism** over almost 1,000 years.

**GAWDAT GABRA**

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