



**Archdeacon Habib Girgis**

# His Life

- He was born in Cairo in 1876.
- While still a child, his father died in 1882.
- His mother gave him a religious upbringing.
- He joined the Copts Secondary School
- He was the first student picked to enroll in the seminary when reestablished in 1893.
- He was appointed religion teacher there while he was a student in the final year.
- He was the highest-ranking graduate of the seminary's **first** graduating class of 1898.

# Called to be a teacher

- He became the first professor of theology and homiletics in the seminary.
- He excelled in preaching and teaching. He found no one to teach him, so he became devoted to the seminary's library, reading, studying, searching, summarizing.
- He also received mentorship from Hegemon Philotheos Ibrahim who was by then a very old man crushed by sickness.
- At the time, the seminary had no specialization in teaching religious subjects. So, he taught all subjects until Simon Silides, Ragheb Atiya (Hegemon Ibrahim Atiya) and other pioneers of that generation came.

# A Disciple of Many

- He served with patriarchs
  - H.H. Pope Kyrillos V
  - H.H. Pope Yohannes XIX
  - H.H. Pope Makarius III
  - And H.H. Pope Yuosab II.
- He was very appreciated by all of them, as well as by all Metropolitans, Bishops, elders of the church, many of whom were his disciples.

# Up to the Task (1)

- At age 22 he was the one who established the seminary in our era: It was he who bought its land in Mahmasha, and built a building for it, very magnificent by the standards of the time.
  - The Seminary building, the dormitories, and the increase in teachers numbers in many areas.
  - Beside the many courses in religion, he introduced courses in logic, philosophy, psychology, Hebrew, and Greek.
  - He also increased emphasis on the study of Arabic, English, Coptic, history, and church hymns, which was taught by al-Mu'allim Mikhail, the chief cantor of the church.

# Up to the Task (2)

- He established the School for Cantors attached to the seminary.
- He also built a church for the seminary, which is now St Mary Church in Mahmasha. He went around the country raising funds for the seminary. He was able to convince his friends to donate lands to the school. One of them was a righteous lady Roma Athanasius she donated 365 acres of land.
- On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1898, he was appointed dean of the Seminary by a letter from H.H. Pope Kyrillos V. He continued in this capacity 53 years until his departure

# Gifted Preacher

- He taught in every venue and became the symbol of education in his generation and a mentor to all teachers. He preached in many churches, and he was the preacher of the Cathedral
- He once delivered a famous sermon there in the presence of Pope Kyrillos V, who remained standing during the one-hour long sermon blessing him with the sign of the cross.

# Creativity without a limit (1)

- Because there were not many churches, the importance of societies as platforms for preaching was obvious. Societies also provided social services and caring for the poor and orphans. Besides, it was these societies that established churches.
- Society of al-Nasha'a [Upbringing] in Haret al-Sakkayeen was one of the famous societies in which he preached.
- He also founded preached in al-Iman [Faith] Coptic Society



# Creativity without a Limit (2)

- He was also the founder of al-Mahaba [Love] Society for Childhood Education.
- He was an active member in al-Khaireya [Benevolent] Coptic Society and was instrumental in establishing Friends of the Holy Bible Society.
- From within the seminary he established societies for preaching including the Society of Church Soldiers, Society of the Word of Salvation, and the Alumni Society. These societies operated in 84 centers for the ministry of the Word.
- In no time, they established churches in al-Suff, al-Quanater al-Khaireya, Ain Shams, Almaza, and other locations. These became large fields of ministry for the seminary students.

# A Servant with a Vision<sup>(1)</sup>

- Certainly Habib Girgis was a visionary and pioneer in God's field.
  - At age 24 St Habib Girgis started the Sunday School Movement for religious education of the young in their own communities.
  - Professor Habib Girgis established Sunday Schools (in 1900) and designed its curriculum. The Seminary and Sunday School became one educational entity under his leadership.
- He was appointed by the Pope to become the first Supreme Head of Sunday School and its General Committee.
  - He printed for it elegant handout cards with a colored image on one side and the lesson (of the week) on the other.

# A Servant with a Vision<sup>(2)</sup>

- He stayed alone as the only teacher for a long time. In 1941 he held the first Sunday Teacher Conference where 400 teachers attended. In other words, it took 40 years to get 400 teachers to work in Sunday School.
- The pioneers of Sunday School movement were fully devoted to God and their service
- Sunday School movement faced with many obstacles, as a new movement in the church. Habib Girgis did not lose hope rather he was so determined.
- However, the Sunday School movement has prevailed because of secrets of the devotion and the persistence of Habib Girgis and his companions

# A Servant with a Vision<sup>(3)</sup>

- As a result of this inflaming fire of love in the hearts of Sunday School teachers, many dedicated their lives to Christ. Waves of youth went to the monasteries to start a dedicated monastic life or to priesthood or to work as dedicated servants. Because these servants were full of spiritual energy they lead generations to the fullness of Christ.

# A Servant with a Vision<sup>(4)</sup>

- In 1946 Habib Girgis established the evening seminary for university graduates. Many leaders of Sunday Schools from the Cairo and Giza churches enrolled
- Another Vision of Habib Girgis was to write the religion curriculum and books for schools.
  - In 1909 he wrote his book, Summary of Faith Fundamentals, in three volumes for elementary schools. It was well received by teachers and students.
  - In 1937, he wrote eight new books in a series, Orthodox Christian Principles, to suit elementary and secondary schools. Later he wrote three books in another series, Precious Treasure of Holy History.
  - These became the formal textbooks in both government and Coptic schools.
  - He also communicated with authorities in the Ministry of Education to increase attention to religious education.

# A Gifted Journalist

- He published his famous magazine, al-Karma, in 17 volumes. Its deep and powerful articles and high caliber authors distinguished the magazine.
  - Its first issue was in 1907, and Habib Girgis was assisted in its authorship by: the famous lawyer Gabriel Bek al-Tukhi, the famous judge Nassif Bek al-Tukhi, Archon Professor Takla Rizk who taught religion and science at the seminary, Professor Yassa abdel Messieh who taught Greek and rites at the seminary and was librarian at the Coptic Museum, Professor Simon Silides who taught theology at the seminary, Quossa Bek Girgis the preacher and writer, Mr Kamel Girgis, Aziz Bek Marcus, and Dawoud Bek Ghali.
- It was a first that this magazine published translations of patristic literature. It became the best Coptic magazine of its time.
- It published research in church canon law, science and religion, biblical studies, doctrine and theology. Each issue included a powerful spiritual sermon by the teacher Habib Girgis. It is believed the magazine was discontinued in 1931 due to financial reasons.

# Wrote Many Books

- The Seven Sacraments of the Church.
- In comparative theology, The Orthodox Rock
- In church history, St. Mark the Evangelist; and The Life of St. Paula and St. Antony.
- In spirituality, he published several books,
  - The Mystery of Righteousness
  - Spiritual Views of Christian Life
  - Comfort to the Faithful
  - The Spirit of Supplications.
- He also wrote on his hopes for reformation his book, Practical Means for Coptic Reformation.

# A Gifted Poet

- God gave him the gift to write religious Melodies and songs.
- All have Orthodox character. Some were songs for Sunday School children.
- These melodies were published in two books, Orthodox Songs and Theological Melodies.
- Archdeacon Habib also authored an anthem for the Seminary.



# A Kind hearted and loving Servant

- People loved Habib greatly because of his care for education in all areas, and because of his spiritual personality.
- In elections of the General Community Council (Majlis Milli), he received the highest number of votes in most terms.

# How He Is Remembered Today

- Habib Girgis is and will always be remembered as **the pioneer** of religious education in our land in modern history. He was not only a teacher, but **a school**, even **a university**.
- Importantly, he was a symbol for **positive work** in the church, a symbol for the **love of education**, a symbol for **meekness**, **zeal** and many virtues.

# Pope Shenouda III Says



“Habib Girgis established a strong foundation, and many built upon it. Perhaps others were able to build higher, but without his foundation, they would not have been able to build at all. He was the one who labored and all of us have entered into his labor.”

# Pope Shenouda III Says

- هذه دنياك : هذه تقواك: ايمان فحب
- أنت أبهي من رسول أنت، من أنت؟ رسول ههنا؟
- عاش جيل كامل أو عاش أنت قلب واسع في حضنه
- 
- وأب أنت ونحن يا أبي

- Glory Be to God Forever