

**Reverend Father Mikhail Ibrahim
(20th April 1899 – 26th March 1975)**



On the 26th of March our Church celebrates the anniversary of the departure to heaven of the Very Reverend Father Mikhail Ibrahim, parish priest of St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church, Shubra, Cairo.

1. A Life of Prayer

Father Mikhail Ibrahim was ordained priest in 1951 and served faithfully our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and his children (both in rural Egypt and in Cairo).

Innumerable problems were presented to him and only through deep and profound prayers he was able to solve them, fulfilling the words of St. John: "This is the confidence that we have Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us." (1 John 5:14).

Many saw Father Mikhail assigning responsibilities to the Saints just prior to leaving the Church. To St. Mary he would say, "Please take care of so and so." To St. Mark he would say, "You take care of this situation." To St. George he would say, "Please resolve this problem." He goes home believing that all is taken care of. He would ask his parishioners to pray for him, and when one brought a problem to his attention he immediately responded with: "Let us pray." He seldom gave advice because he believed strongly in the power of prayer. He would say, "let us pray and God will bring us the solution".

A Spiritual Pillar and Guide

Father Mikhail became the confession Father to many most notable persons such as His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, the late Father Bishop Kamel (1931-1979) and Father Gawargious Kolta (USA) to name just a few. Filled with the Spirit of the Lord (Ephesians 5:18), Father Mikhail guided many in the spiritual path with simplicity and sincerity. He uplifted the fallen and vulnerable, strengthening their spirituality.

Father Mikhail always felt that he carried the burdens and the sins of his children in confession. Whatever he advised them by way of spiritual exercises, he would apply to himself. A man came to Father Mikhail confessing a number of serious sins which had troubled him for many years. In gentleness and warmth, Father Mikhail embraced him and said, "Dearest son, one of the ways of fulfilling and preserving your repentance is to perform 30 matanyas. However, as your health will not allow, permit me to do them on your behalf, my son."

Dealing with Family Problems

Pope Shenouda III appointed Father Mikhail Ibrahim to the Clerical Council to assist with family problems. One day he sat in the presence of a Bishop, the head of the Council, and some priests to discuss a dispute between a married couple. None of the people present could find any solution to that problem. The presiding Bishop asked Father Mikhail, "Why don't you tell us what you think, Father Mikhail?" Since he was silent. Father Mikhail responded, "Your grace, let us pray." The Bishop responded, "We prayed prior to this meeting." Father Mikhail answered, "But we did not pray for this problem." They all stood to pray in the presence of the disputing couple and the Bishop asked Father Mikhail to pray. After the prayer ended the spirit of peace (Philippians 4:7) filled the couple and they hugged in front of all who were present and dropped their complaint. One of the people present was joking with Father Mikhail saying, "You should have mentioned this suggestion from the beginning Father Mikhail. It would have relieved us."

Great Love for the Poor

Father Mikhail cared deeply for the poor, and he used to advise the servants, "Be gentle with them, they have already suffered enough." He always said to give to the poor with joy and generosity; fulfilling the words of St. Paul, "God loves a cheerful giver" (1 Corinthians 9:7). One day he was giving meat to the poor and had a list of 200 families. A Muslim woman approached one of the servants who was assisting Father Mikhail pretending to be a Christian. When she was refused help because she had lied, she went and told Father Mikhail. He brought her by the hand and asked the servant to help her. Father Mikhail was told what she had done but he insisted, saying, "Whoever asks from you, do not turn them away."

Accepting Insults

One day Father Mikhail was walking in a small, dark alley in Shubra with his senior colleague, Father Marcos Dawoud (1897-1986), when several children surrounded them, hurling insults at them. Father Marcos was very upset and mentioned their lack of manners, while Father Mikhail was smiling and told him, "Let them enjoy the moment, we are not better than our Master who was insulted by the Jews."

Personal Tragedies

Father Mikhail was a man of sorrow. He lost two sons, Philemon and Paul as infants. He lost his eldest son Ibrahim when he was a promising young doctor. This was followed shortly afterwards by the departure of his dear wife, Mary. To the people who came to comfort him, he gave the words of comfort, "I thank God because I have three sons and their mother praying for me." Only a great man can utter such words in the face of adversity. It was not easy for him to be a widower with all his responsibilities, spending his days in the Church and his evenings, which usually extended to the early hours of the next morning, hearing confessions which mostly took place in his house which was less than a hundred yards away.

The Departure to Heaven!

Father Mikhail departed our vain world on 26th March 1975. His Holiness Pope Shenouda presided over the funeral service at St. Mark's Cathedral in which His Holiness said, "Father Mikhail was a man from heaven...heaven delegated him for a period of time so that he would dwell among us and to offer to humanity a good example and a bright image of a sound spiritual life." Pope Shenouda insisted that Father Mikhail be buried in the crypt of the Cathedral and that a special shrine be made in his honour, that successive generations would receive his blessings. Two years later, Pope Shenouda published a book entitled: "Father Mikhail Ibrahim: An exemplary in Pastoral Ministry". Out of his deep love and devotion for Father Mikhail Ibrahim, Pope Shenouda went on to ordain priests carrying the name Mikhail Ibrahim.

Now with the 24 elders, praising and glorifying God, before the throne of grace, Father Mikhail intercedes for us that we "may work out our salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12).

Pray to the Lord on our behalf our holy Father Abouna Mikhail Ibrahim, that the Lord may forgive us our sins and have mercy upon us.