

Brief Explanation of Church Canons Regarding Diocesan Bishop Nomination to the Patriarchate

Many queries reached us and we read various opinions regarding this issue, to which we responded in detail (www.metroplit-bishoy.org) and here we offer a brief explanation on this issue.

- 1) The source for this issue is Apostolic Canon 14, which permitted diocesan bishops to relocate for good reasons and under specific circumstances as that he can contribute much greater profit to the people.
- 2) When it became a prevailing habit for bishops to relocate in a way that violated the Apostolic Canon, the Council of Nicaea 325 AD passed an administrative ruling to prevent great disturbance. Despite this, this Council agreed to relocate two bishops from their dioceses, on the basis of applying the Apostolic Canon rightfully. Thus, the exception for good reason was maintained by the Council of Nicaea of 325 AD. **Naturally, the Council of Nicaea 325 AD cannot repeal the Apostolic Canon; rather, it prevented violating it.**
- 3) **His Holiness Pope Shenouda III** titled the front page article of the Keraza Magazine dated May 5, 1995: **“All the patriarchs of our Orthodox Churches were previously bishops.”**
- 4) His Holiness Pope Shenouda III hand wrote (cf. www.metroplit-bishoy.org) supporting the nomination of metropolitans and bishops to the patriarchal throne. This he wrote while bishop of education, during the nominations for the papal throne at its vacancy in 1971 AD. In his handwriting, he pointed to the enthronement of the Ethiopian patriarchs by our church, and the current patriarchal election by-laws of 1971 which is the 1957 by-law completed by canon 20 in 1971, which allows for nominating metropolitans, bishops, and monks. This by-law remains effective to this day.
- 5) **His Holiness Pope Cyril VI** enthroned Abouna Basillious the **Metropolitan of Shua** as Catholicos Patriarch for Ethiopian on July 28, 1959. **The Holy Synod envoy** of our church, headed by the locum tenens Metropolitan Antonious of Suhag, ordained Abouna Theophilous the **Bishop of Harar** as Patriarch of Ethiopia on June 9, 1971.
- 6) On July 28, 1928, the Holy Synod nullified the decision of the 1873 synod, whose decision was passed under very special circumstances, not applicable beyond the circumstances of its time, especially since it relied on an incorrect translation of Apostolic Canon 14.
Following is the text of the 1928 Synod decision: **“To constantly follow the principle of promoting one of the metropolitans or bishops to the rank of patriarch once the patriarchal throne is vacated.”**
- 7) Regarding the circumstances of the 1873 AD Synod: the metropolitans and bishops refused to have Metropolitan Marcos of Behaira, the deputy of the See of St. Mark and the patriarchal vicar, imposed upon them by the Khedewy through Mr. Wahba Al-Gezawy, the senior financial scribe. It issued a decision that excommunicates the nomination of diocesan bishops to the patriarchal throne and everyone who accepts it. If these excommunications were applied to the following generations, the apostolic succession of our church would be broken —God forbid— as we shall clarify.

- 8) All the metropolitans and bishops who enthroned His Holiness Pope Cyril VI were ordained by Pope Yuannis XIX, who had been metropolitan of Behaira and Menufia, and Pope Yusab II, who was metropolitan of Girga, except Metropolitan Athanasius who took part in the enthronement of Pope Yuanis XIX in 1928. If the excommunications of the 1873 synod were applied —God forbid— then all those would have been excommunicated, beginning from Pope Yuannis XIX until Pope Shenouda III, along with all whom he and the previous patriarchs had ordained [Pope Yuannis XIX, Pope Macarius III (who did not ordain any bishops), Pope Yusab II, and Pope Cyril VI].
- 9) Is it fitting for the contemporary fathers of our church to publish excommunications, thus breaking the chain of apostolic succession of our church? The apostolic precept is to “rightly divide the word of truth” (Cf. 2 Tim 2:15).

Metropolitan Bishoy

of Damiette and Kafr El Sheikh

Head of the Monastery of St. Demiana, Barary Belquas

Website:

www.metroplit-bishoy.org

10th of July, 2012

Commemoration of St. Cyril the great of Alexandria the Pillar of Faith