Dear Readers

Welcome to the second issue of SACOTC’s newsletter for 2013.

2013 has been a busy and exciting one for SACOTC, we’ve introduced two online units, had a fantastic Semester 1 with a record number of 70 students, including our first interstate and overseas students, and we also welcomed our first students outside of the Coptic faith. Also for the first time, we will have 4 students graduating through the accredited stream. This is a very exciting milestone for SACOTC!

This year we also held several key events such as an academic symposium on St Severus of Antioch in March and lectures from notable speakers including Dr Marc Malevez from the Université Libre de Bruxelles in September, who presented two lectures on Coptic Monasticism, and His Grace Bishop Antonious-Morcos who visited SACOTC in October and gave a very interesting lecture on Mission work and the characteristics of the mission worker.

2014 is shaping up to be another big year. Encouraged by the enthusiasm of our students, the entire faculty is currently working hard on developing new units to add to the fifteen units already offered and we hope to have at least a few of these ready for second semester in 2014. We are also looking at the introduction of new awards in the near future and hope to bring you more news about this in coming issues.

From all of us at SACOTC, thank you for a wonderful second year and our very best wishes for a wonderful Feast of the Nativity and a safe and happy start to 2014!

In This Edition:

- Our Dean visits St Vladimir’s
- SACOTC students and staff embark on further studies
- Symposium on St Severus of Antioch – with featured interviews
- Seminar on Coptic Monasticism… and much more
St Habib Girgis played a major role in the establishment of the Sunday School movement in the early twentieth century, and wrote its first constitution and curriculum. His piety and administrative ability was such that he was nominated three times to be bishop, and once as patriarch in 1946.

He is both a published author and scholar, whose contribution to the Coptic church is substantial. The late His Holiness Pope Shenouda III states: “Our teacher Habib Girgis, pioneer of religious education in our generation, started his life in an age which was almost void of religious education and knowledge… The earth was without form, and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep, as the book of Genesis describes. Then God said, ‘Let there be light,” and there was light. And the light was Habib Girgis.’

St Archdeacon Habib Girgis is a pioneer in modern Christian education, having devoted his life to the service of theological education, with a grand vision for theological teaching across the Coptic Orthodox Church.

He was born in 1876, amidst a dark time in the Coptic Orthodox Church. He studied at the Theological School, after it’s opening from 1893-1898. At 23 years of age, he was appointed a lecturer at the school and remained there for 22 years. In 1918, he was appointed as dean and served in this role for the 33 years that would follow.

On 21st June 2013 the Holy Synod of the Coptic Orthodox Church, canonized Pope Kyrellos VI and Archdeacon Habib Girgis as saints of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

I am so joyful and proud that Archdeacon Habib Girgis has been canonized a saint of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Even though he was not a priest or bishop, yet he left a great legacy for our Church and is an inspiration for lay people to live righteous and holy lives. St. Habib Girgis inspires me every time I read about his work and life that he dedicated to the Lord and to the Church and to teaching and religious and theological education.

I am sure that His Holiness Pope Shenouda III is rejoicing in Paradise with St. Habib Girgis! This event has much significance for me personally as I continue my journey to complete my PhD on this great saint of our modern history.

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From the Dean’s Desk

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Much has happened since our last issue including a very eventful 1st semester. In our last newsletter I mentioned that we would be hosting a symposium on 2nd & 3rd March 2013 dedicated to the great St entitled Severus of Antioch – *His times and legacy*. The symposium which was planned in celebration of the 1500th anniversary of the ordination of St Severus as a Bishop, drew a large number of attendees and was a huge success.

Several notable speakers and authorities on St Severus presented as follows, including our own Dr Youhanna Youssef:

**Professor Pauline Allen**  
Severus of Antioch: Heir of John Chrysostom

**Professor Rifaat Ebied**  
Quotations from the Works of St. Severus of Antioch in Peter of Callinicus’s magnum opus, “Contra Damianum”

**Rev. John D’Alton**  
Severus’ Homily 18 in relation to Cappadocian and Syriac traditions

**Dr Ken Parry**  
The Doves of Antioch: Severus, Chalcedonians, and Iconoclasm

**Dr Malcolm Choat**  
Monastic Papyri from the Time of Severus

**Dr Youhanna Youssef**  
Coptic Monks in the Time of Severus

In a spirit of great brotherly love His Eminence Mor Malatius Malki Malki, the Patriarchal Vicar of the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia and New Zealand travelled from Sydney to attend this event with us, along with many of His Eminence’s Melbourne flock.

A key part of the Symposium was a small exhibition entitled Coptic Textiles from the 6th century and beyond, which in a major coup for SACOTC, featured many rare and precious pieces of Coptic and Pharaonic textiles dated from the 6th - 17th centuries that have never before been on loan or exhibited anywhere in the world!

These fragments were generously loaned to us from Queens College at The University of Melbourne and it was quite an honour for SACOTC to be the first to show them anywhere. Sincere thanks to all who made this event the success it was.

Semester 1 was exceptional for us with 69 students enrolled by the census date! This was due in large part to the introduction of our very first online unit, *Old testament 1 – A Patristic Approach*, in which 29 students enrolled, including five students from a non-Coptic faith tradition (three from Perth and two from Melbourne). 21 new students enrolled with us for the first time, many of them doing single subjects and we had our very first completed Diploma with Tasoni Amal El Menchawy, completing her Diploma in Theology in record time of one and half years!

Enrolments for semester 2 totalled a respectable 52 students. As expected this was slightly lower given the number of single-subject students in the previous semester. Semester 2 will hopefully see 3 more students complete their Diplomas, giving us a total of 4 students who will be our inaugural graduates at 2014’s MCD University Graduation Ceremony!! This will be a very proud moment for these graduates and the entire SACOTC community, and a major achievement to have several students complete the Diploma within the 1st two years. God willing there will be another 6 students due to complete their Diplomas in 2014!

In other news the library is now fully up and running so please make sure you supply Deborah Decru our librarian, with a passport sized photo so she can produce a library card for you.

I will be updating students further via email and other electronic media as more details come to hand, so please make sure to regularly check our website and Facebook pages for updates.

Very best regards

Jacqueline Mina  
Registrar
Fifteen centuries on from the ordination of St Severus of Antioch, SACOTC hosted a symposium entitled *Severus of Antioch: His Times and Legacy*. The conference featured several scholars and academics alongside Pauline Allen, a renowned authority and published author, whose work centres on the character of St Severus. His Grace Bishop Suriel, Chancellor and Dean of SACOTC, opened the symposium with a formal welcome, and His Eminence Mor Malatius Malki Malki, Patriarchal Vicar of the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia and New Zealand, gave some insights into the life of this saint.

The exhibition included Coptic textiles and other items from the sixth century that had never been publicly displayed before the symposium.

The conference gave participants not only a flavour of authentic Orthodox theology, but augmented this with the wonder and awe of Orthodox liturgical worship.
Interview with Prof. Pauline Allen

Q. What initially interested you, in your early days of studies, in ‘Early Christian Studies’?

A. My background is classics, that is Classical Greek and Latin. While writing my Master’s thesis I realised that in that discipline one spent too much time reading the huge secondary literature rather than concentrating on the texts themselves. This prompted me to look for another area where there was still something to contribute while at the same time using the Greek and Latin languages, and at that stage there was plenty of scope for that in the area of early Christian studies.

Q. What led you to studies in the life and personality of Severus of Antioch and to finally your writings of such a fantastic publication of his life and times?

A. One of the fields I specialised in was the period after the Council of Chalcedon in 451, so of course it was only a small step to become interested in Severus of Antioch, whose work profoundly influenced both adherents and opponents of the council. I am also interested in letter-writing in Christian antiquity and Severus’s surviving letters are wonderful examples of how a late-antique bishop interacted with his people, both while he was in power and during his long exile in Egypt. It was consequently a pleasure to accept the invitation from Routledge press to write an introductory work on Severus for their series ‘The early Church Fathers’, with Professor Robert Hayward from the University of Durham UK.

Q. Are there any interests in Early Coptic studies and have you devoted any specific research on any Coptic Alexandrian Fathers?

A. Because of my fascination with letter-writing in Christian antiquity I have studied the Festal letters of the great Alexandrians, Athanasius, Theophilus, and Cyril. In particular I have focused on how St Cyril used these letters as a means of establishing his authority, maintaining orthodoxy, and dealing with social problems like gang violence in rural Egypt.

Q. What relationship, if any, do you have with the Coptic Academic Circle whether in Australia or abroad, and has it been of any aid in your many researches over the years?

A. In Australia I have had close contacts with Coptic scholars like Professor Rifaat Ebied, Dr Youhanna Nessim Youssef, and Dr Malcolm Choat. My attendance at a Coptic conference at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina two years ago gave me an opportunity to meet and learn from Coptic and Arabic scholars from around the world, and in particular to benefit from their archaeological and art-historical expertise.

Q. Any words of encouragement for our much loved theological college and to the students?

A. I have been associated with SACOTC for a number of years now and have been a strong supporter of the vision which Bishop Suriel and Father Makarius have had for the College. It was very gratifying earlier this year to see how splendidly the campus, facilities, and curriculum have developed. And it goes without saying that the enthusiasm which the Coptic community have for the life of the college is most impressive. May it go from strength to strength.

Interview with Carla Schodde
(Visiting Arts Student from Melbourne University)

Q. What prompted you to attend the Symposium?

A. Well I study classics at Melbourne University including Latin and Ancient Greek and I am interested in Syriac and Coptic as languages. I am also interested in Roman, Coptic and Syriac History.

Q. How are you enjoying the Symposium?


Q. How did you like the venue and people?

A. Very friendly and welcoming especially at the college. It’s also very fascinating to see an orthodox Coptic church that’s alive.
I attended the Symposium of Christianity and Monasticism in Middle Egypt organized by the Saint Mark Foundation for Coptic History. The symposium took place in the seminary of the monastery of Al-Muharraq. The symposium was opened by HH Pope Tawadros II on 4th February 2013. The governor of Assiut attended the inaugural ceremony along with distinguished guests of the region.

During the symposium, His Holiness presented a Coptic icon to Professor Peter Grossmann in recognition of his work in the field of Coptic Archaeology. Several papers were presented, dealing with different aspects of this region such as papyrology of Bawit which was presented by Dr Alain Delattre from Belgium. Coptic inscriptions in the region were presented by Professor J. Van der Vliet Leiden University. The art history was also presented by two scholars. Leiden Karel Innemee presented on the wall painting of Bawit and G. Van Loom presented on the wall painting of Dayr Abu Hennis.

My contribution spanned the special features in the liturgical traditions of the monastery of Al-Muharraq. Father Angelus al-Naqluni presented a paper about the manuscript collection in the village of Bani Magd, while Fr Angelus al-Muharraqi presented another paper about the history of the monastery of al-Muharraq. During the break times of the symposium, the attendees visited the monastery of Rifah al-Gabal, the monastery of Gabal al-Tayr and the monastery of the Virgin Drunkah, where they were welcomed by His Grace Bishop Paphnotius. His Grace Bishop Demetrius of Mallawi welcomed the participants to the monastery of Abu Fanah and the field director of the excavations of the site of Bawit, Madame Gizelle Mongilou, received them in the site of Bawit where she explained the future of the excavations.

This symposium gathered experts from all over the world such as the USA, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Australia and Poland. At the conclusion of the symposium, it was decided that the next symposium will be held in the monastery of Saint Menas and will cover Lower Egypt and some parts of Middle Egypt that have not been studied at previous symposia.

Dr Youhana Youssef

Interview with Keith Ryder (Youth leader from local Coptic Church)

Q. What prompted you to attend the Symposium?
A. I am very interested in Saint Severus. My nephew recently got ordained as a full deacon by the name of Severus and he told me you should check him out as he is one of the most important figures of the church.

Q. How are you enjoying the Symposium?
A. More than expected and wouldn’t change a thing. It’s just so good sitting at the feet of such great scholars.

Q. How did you like the venue and people?
A. Fantastic!
On Monday 18th March 2013, SACOTC lost a very important member of its academic board. Magdy Gayed was involved with SACOTC since its beginning, and saw it grow to accreditation. His contribution to the life of the college is very much valued and is sure to be remembered as a part of its history.

Below is the eulogy that His Grace Bishop Suriel delivered at Magdy Gayed’s funeral.

A Message From Our Dean on The Departure of Magdy Gayed.

Magdy was a very much-respected personality of our Coptic community in Melbourne. He was a very successful High School Principal for many years. He also gave me great advice regularly on St. Anthony’s College and in every time I met with him I felt his genuineness and love for Coptic education and for his Church. Magdy played a pivotal role in the accreditation process in order for St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College to become a College of the MCD University of Divinity. He believed in the vision of the College and could see its potential. It was the first thing that Magdy asked me about when I visited him, I can still hear his voice asking me, “How is the College going Your Grace?” When I informed him that we have almost 70 students and most of them studying the accredited stream and that online study had begun successfully Magdy’s face lit up with joy. He could feel that all the hard work that he participated in had finally come to bear much fruit.

It is very difficult for me to say goodbye to Magdy as I had the deepest respect for him, his work, his wisdom and dedication to his Church and to Coptic education and in particular to the Theological College. Magdy also loved his wife Nahia very much, that was evident. When our College meetings went overtime he would excuse himself in order to tend to the needs of his wife and he was always deeply concerned for her health and wellbeing and did not want to leave her alone for a long time.

Dear beloved Magdy, although you have left our world yet you will always be in our hearts and minds and we will never forget your service to the Church and to our diocese and your meekness and kind nature is an example to us all. We know that you are in a better place in the Paradise, the place where there is no more grief, sorrow, groaning or pain. Even though it is difficult not to see you face to face in the flesh yet we know that your spirit lives on. We know that death is only a bridge to a better life with the Lord and His saints.

Indeed today you can say with St. Paul the apostle, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7) In the same chapter St. Paul says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:3-5) Truly Magdy fulfilled his ministry and dedicated his life to education and to sound doctrine and could see the necessity and the fundamental need of sound Orthodox teaching to be taught to future generations in this diocese through the schools and the Theological College. He did all within his reach to further this education for the benefit of all.

Rest in peace my dear friend and humble servant of the Lord, Magdy. May the Lord repose your soul in the bosom of our holy fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Goodbye until we meet again and may the Lord strengthen us to complete our journey of life in peace as He has strengthened you.
Our Chancellor and Dean Receives the Certificate of the Honour Society of Phi Kappa Phi

On Tuesday 19 March 2013 (Feast of the Cross) His Grace Bishop Suriel was inducted into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi at Fordham University. Bishop Suriel considers this not as a personal achievement but as an achievement for all Copts to be proud of. To be inducted in this society, students must gain a Grade Point Average of least 3.9 (out of 4.0) and only the top 10% of students of the University are accepted. His Grace Bishop Suriel’s Grade Point Average is 3.98.

About Phi Kappa Phi

Founded in 1897 at the University of Maine, Phi Kappa Phi is the USA’s oldest, largest, and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. Its chapters are on more than 300 campuses in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Each year, approximately 30,000 members are initiated. Since its founding, Phi Kappa Phi has initiated more than 1 million members into its ranks; all of these members have received emblems and certificates of membership. However, Phi Kappa Phi is much more than an emblem and a line on a résumé. It is a global network comprised of the best and brightest from all academic disciplines - a community of scholars and professionals building an enduring legacy for future generations.

SACOTC Lenten Retreat 2013

On the weekend of the 12th -14th April, the 5th week of the Holy Lent, the office of the Chaplain held the first Lenten retreat for the SACOTC students and staff. The retreat was held in the scenic and serene town of Marysville at the beautiful and recently rebuilt ‘El-Kana’ lodge.

The retreat was attended by 18 delegates and was blessed with the attendance of our beloved father and the dean of SACTOC H.G. Bishop Suriel. During the retreat H.G Bishop Suriel shared with the students some of his most interesting findings and research on St. Archdeacon Habib Girgis, who is the subject of his PhD. Workshops were also given by Dr. Amir Malek and Dr. Magdy Awad. Dr. Amir spoke on the passage of Genesis chapter 1, concerning the creation, comparing patristic commentaries on this passage from the School of Alexandria with the School of Antioch. Dr. Magdy Awad lead a workshop looking at extracts from St. Athanasius’ “On the Incarnation” with many interesting discussions and questions raised on the text. On Saturday evening vespers was prayed in the charming chapel and a most beautiful evening was spent chanting the midnight praises. The highlight of the retreat was the celebration of the Holy Liturgy On Sunday morning, lead by H.G. Bishop Suriel.

All those who attended had a most enjoyable time and appreciated the opportunity to take the time out for prayer and contemplation.
During the first week of Lent, The Very Rev. Dr. John Behr, dean of St. Vladimir’s, and Chancellor/CEO The Very Rev. Dr. Chad Hatfield, hosted a distinguished campus visitor, His Grace Bishop Suriel of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions. In a productive meeting, the three explored possible collaboration between their respective institutions in both hemispheres. SVOTS alumnus Fr. Athanasius Farag of St. Antonious and St. Mina Coptic Church in East Rutherford, NJ, also joined the meeting.

"We had great discussions about cooperation with His Grace’s theological school in Australia, St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College in Donvale, Victoria," explained Fr. John. "We also discussed our overarching vision for working together with the Coptic Church to help them further their goals in theological education."

"It was a very productive hour with His Grace Bishop Suriel," added Fr. Chad. "St. Vladimir's has long been recognized as the epicentre of the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox dialogue, and our conversations this past week commit ourselves to renewing that essential work and witness."

Bishop Suriel is familiar with St. Vladimir’s Seminary, since in his years of ministry in North America he studied towards a Masters degree on the Yonkers campus in the late 1990s. His Grace also served several times as a guest lecturer at the seminary's Eastern–Oriental Orthodox Symposium." It was indeed a great blessing to visit SVOTS again," His Grace reflected. "The meeting was truly fruitful and I pray that it strengthens our relationship further."

Bavly Kost, another first–year Coptic student, also met with His Grace during his visit to St. Vladimir's. "Hosting Bishop Suriel last week was a great honour," he said. "The connection between the Coptic community and St. Vladimir's has been given life, and God willing, this collaboration will attract more Coptic students in the years to come."

First–year Coptic student Mina Andrews noted Bishop Suriel's contribution to the Coptic Church. "He is a pioneer in the establishment of the first accredited Coptic Seminary in the diaspora. His Grace's vision has been very much influenced by the late Pope Shenouda III and His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, and his work is not only recognized in his diocese but in the church at large." An Australian who emigrated with his parents to Sydney as a preschooler, His Grace's enthronement as Bishop of Melbourne in December, 1999 enabled him to return to his roots to minister to the Australian Coptic community of his childhood.

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Dean and Professor of Patristics The Very Rev. Dr. John Behr recently journeyed to Egypt as the guest of His Holiness Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria. The SVOTS dean was accompanied by His Grace Bishop Suriel of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions. Bishop Suriel is familiar with St. Vladimir's Seminary; during his years of ministry in North America in the 1990s he studied towards a Masters degree on the Yonkers campus and has served as a guest lecturer at the seminary's Eastern-Oriental Orthodox Symposium. In Touring Egyptian sights with Bishop Suriel March of this year, Bishop Suriel visited the Seminary to discuss a cooperative relationship between SVOTS and St. Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College in Donvale, Victoria.

In Egypt, Father John spoke on "Orthodox Theological Education in the Twenty-First Century" at the "Theological and Ecclesiastical Institutes Seminar," called by Pope Tawadros to explore the spiritual formation of theological students. Held at the Anaphora Institute, a retreat and training centre near the desert road between Cairo and Alexandria. The seminar featured talks by eminent Coptic bishops, clergy, and scholars.

"Before the conference, it was deeply moving to visit the Monastery of St. Anthony on the Red Sea," said Fr. John, "and to be welcomed by the abbot Fr. Ruwais Antony and his community. The stark, beautiful landscape was the backdrop for their truly beautiful and ancient church and other outbuildings such as the keep built by the Emperor Justinian." During the conference, Bishop Suriel arranged for Fr. John and Pope Tawadros II to meet. "For over an hour we discussed issues pertaining to the Coptic Church, St. Vladimir's Seminary, theological education, and how we might cooperate in future endeavors," said Fr. John.

"From the time I arrived and was warmly greeted and escorted through customs 'VIP style' in Cairo," added Fr. John, "my host Bishop Suriel could not have been more thoughtful and gracious. In one marvellous day, for instance, we visited the Egyptian Museum with its extraordinary collection of antiquities; the Coptic Museum in Old Cairo, with its amazing collection of very early frescoes; the various churches of Old Cairo including the famous Hanging Church; and finally, the 'Sound & Light Show' at the Pyramids of Giza. He also travelled with me after the conference to the monasteries in the desert of Scetis. At Baramous Monastery I spoke to the monks for several hours about my recent work on the themes of life, death, and our humanity." As the political situation became increasingly tense over the course of Fr. John's stay in Egypt, Bishop Suriel arranged for Fr. John to depart on an earlier flight, ensuring his safe passage to the Cairo airport.

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http://www.svots.edu/headlines/bishop-suriel-hosts-svots-dean-eventful-visit-egypt
Our Coptic Orthodox Church is undoubtedly rich in her history, spirituality, mysticism, faith and heritage. In spite of this richness, however, and due to state efforts in Egypt to suppress Coptic history and language, theological education has to date, lagged far behind the spirituality of the Church. For centuries, education and heritage were confined to liturgical services and humble contributions from a few monasteries.

From the Arab invasion in the seventh century till the nineteenth century, Coptic theological education declined to the extent that some Copts had little clue about their own heritage. Christian missionaries to Egypt in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries focused not on the conversion of non-Christians to Christianity but on attracting Copts to their respective traditions. They established Catholic and Anglican schools and missions while the Coptic church, with its lack of resources relied on simple recital classes called kuttabs, most of which were led by one teacher.

It was the effort of His Holiness Pope Cyril IV, St. Archdeacon Habib Girgis, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III of blessed memory, and the establishment of the Coptic Sunday School movement, that would shine the light for the way towards organised theological education.

The Holy Synod invited scholars of different backgrounds from various parts of the world with expertise in theological education. It is clear that His Holiness Pope Tawadros II is committed to the furtherance of theological education, striving to implement new methods consistent with the highest level of education. His aim is to foster and cater for our youth and children, and to build up Coptic scholars who will pass on the heritage and faith we have received from St Clement, St Athanasius, St Cyril and other defenders of the faith. His Holiness attended two of the three days, heading the conference and addressing its attendees, despite the unsettled political situation leading up to the 30th of June mass protest against the Egyptian Government.

His Grace Bishop Suriel was chosen by His Holiness to address the conference on Coptic theological institutions, and the importance of their accreditation. His presentation was followed by many questions and sparked much interest. Heads of other colleges were keen to know more about the process of accreditation that SACOTC embarked on.

One of the other highlights of the conference was the attendance of Rev. Dr. John Behr, Dean of St Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary. His Holiness attended this lecture and expressed his delight at the contribution of a very well recognised Orthodox scholar. Fr. John emphasised the importance of accreditation for theological seminaries, not only for recognition but also for accountability.

Personally, I was impressed by the way the conference was organised, the collaboration between members of different churches and the keenness to update our knowledge as a church. The Coptic Church has started a new leap towards theological programs that match the richness of our spirituality and heritage.

At the end of the conference His Holiness Pope Tawadros II announced the establishment of a sub-committee within the Holy Synod for theological education. Its role will be to overlook the process of advancing education and research in the Coptic Church. His Holiness asked His Grace Bishop Suriel to supervise this committee.
On Sunday 15th September 2013, SACOTC welcomed Dr Marc Malevez from Université Libre de Bruxelles for a special seminar series on Coptic Monasticism. Dr Malevez delivered two lectures, the first about *The Diet of the Coptic Wanderer Monks in Late Antiquity* and the second, on *The Spiritual Reasoning of the First Coptic Monks*. Many attendees were intrigued by the sheer interest and depth of knowledge that was shared. “There is immense spiritual value in lectures such as these,’ said Abraam, a student of SACOTC. “I am also delighted to know that people such as Dr Malevez, who are not of Coptic origin, show such avid interest in our heritage,” he added.

Dr Marc Malevez holds a PhD in History and Civilisations of Middle Egypt from the University Paris-Sorbonne and a PhD in Languages and Arts from the University of Liege. He has mastered several ancient and contemporary languages such as Greek, Latin, Geez, Syriac, Coptic, English and Italian during the course of his studies.

Dr Malevez’s main area of interest is Coptic Monasticism, and in particular, the wanderer monks. He is the author of many publications in the field of Coptic monasticism in several leading periodicals in France, Belgium and Canada. He has also organised three international congresses in this field. Dr Malevez is a member of the International Association for Coptic Studies and several other notable associations in the area of Coptology and Oriental Studies.

This was a free public event hosted by SACOTC, and attended by many SACOTC students and others alike. We are delighted to have had the pleasure of hosting Dr Malevez and his wife during their stay in Melbourne, which in fact marks their first visit to Australia. Dr Malevez also delivered a talk at Macquarie University in Sydney during his trip.

**Deacon David Kamel gifts Two Books to SACOTC**

Deacon David Kamel has kindly donated two treasured books to the St Athanasius Library. The books are titled *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, edited by David Bercot and *Coptic Dictionary* by W. E. Crum.

*A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* is a reference guide to more than 700 topics discussed by the Church fathers, and the *Coptic Dictionary* is the most popular lexicon of various Coptic dialects.

SACOTC wishes to thank Deacon David for his generous donation.
On Sunday 20\textsuperscript{th} October 2013, SACOTC hosted a most interesting lecture on Mission by His Grace Bishop Antonious-Morcos. His Grace is general bishop of African Affairs in the Coptic Orthodox Church, and began mission work in Ethiopia in 1967. In 1977, His Grace went on to preach in Kenya and the surrounding African countries. Today, the authentic apostolic church of Africa makes its home in 15 nations on the continent. The flame of Orthodoxy still burns at the turn of the twenty-first century, and the fire of the Spirit continues to kindle the hearts of many, turning them to the truth of scripture.

His Grace spoke of mission not merely as a supplement to Christianity, but a pillar on which it stands. He opened the lecture with an exhortation for others to participate in mission work, itself being a Biblical command. He reminded us of the words of Christ, that ‘you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me… to the end of the earth.’ (Acts 1:8 NKJV)

It was noted, that the root word for ‘witnesses’ is more accurately translated ‘martyrs,’ from the Greek martyría. This would be the first of the five distinct defining features of any apostolic church. Alongside martyría, the life of witnessing, the church witnesses to Christ through kerygma, preaching the word of God. The church lives in koinonia (fellowship), and liturgia (the life of prayer), and flourishes through diaconia (the life of service).

Having served in Africa, His Grace gave a brief history of missionary activity there. He mentioned that the first Catholic missionaries arrived in 1494, and spent tens of years learning the vernacular languages of the region before writing bilingual dictionaries, which they would later use to translate the Bible. Whilst risking their lives for the spread of the gospel, and through sweat and tears, they brought a message of hope to millions. Today there are 500 million Christians in Africa, and the Bible is translated into 650 tribal languages. “We are reaping what others have sown,” His Grace said humbly.

His Grace then went on to explain his work on unveiling ancient Christianity in Africa, and his association with Dr Thomas Oden, a notable scholar, some of whose published work centres on African Christianity, and whose efforts are geared toward the unity of the Christian church. Bishop Antonious-Morcos gifted the St Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Library with two books by Thomas Oden, titled, \textit{How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity} and \textit{The African Memory of Mark: Reassessing Early Church Tradition}. His Grace also gifted the library with copies of his own work, \textit{Theology of Mission}.

His Grace ended his lecture with a powerful statement. “We are the sons and daughters of 2000 years of Christianity,” he said. “Not only by tongue. No, but by blood, by sweat, by tears, by martyrdom [and] by standing against [heresies].

Deacon David Furthers His Studies

Deacon David Kamel is currently studying towards his Master of Theology at Catholic Theological College (CTC), a college of the MCD University of Divinity. His studies are centred on mission and evangelism. “By God’s grace, and the help and support of our beloved His Grace Bishop Suriel, I started this degree last year… and God willing I will start my Doctorate next year,” said Deacon David.

Deacon David completed his Diploma in Theology by correspondence some fifteen years ago, through Pope Shenouda III Theological College in Sydney. He also went on to study a further five units at SACOTC in its early stages, prior to accreditation. SACOTC wishes Deacon David every success with his studies and encourages other students to follow suit in furthering their studies in theology.
I am currently studying towards a Master of Arts in Theology, with a major in Church Canon and Ethics with a focus on Coptic Orthodox Church canon and ethics. Church Canon is the study of the laws and decrees that regulate both the administration of the church and the conduct of its clergy and laity, this includes defining or setting the parameters of church dogma. Thus Canon Law is an integral part of the Church that assists its members in understanding and knowing what to do and how to act and is therefore closely related with ethics or more accurately morals. Ethics from a western perspective is the study of philosophical theories and models, which determine how one should act, in other words what is right or wrong. However Orthodox Christian Ethics is seen not as a philosophy or theory but as a way of life that leads to salvation or healing. Fr. John Romanides puts it this way:

“In the Orthodox Church we do not find mere ethical systems, but a therapeutic method, setting out ways in which people are cured. These are not, of course, external means, but ways of co-operation between God and man, as grace acts and man collaborates.”

Fr. John Romanides views Orthodox Christian ethics as ‘Ascetic teachings’ Church Canon and Orthodox ethics are essential in guiding us to know God. It is only by guidance from church canons that we can be directed in the path of God’s will. And through Orthodox ascetical teachings and practices can we be purified and enlightened to see God. This is exactly what St. Paul teaches us in Romans 12:1-2:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

This can be especially difficult in the times that we live, in which church canon and dogma are no longer adhered to and the foundations of ethical theories have been destroyed, leading to the redefining of right and wrong in ways that are contrary to Orthodox Christianity. Studying canon and ethics is therefore a way that we can return to our traditions or heritage, especially as we live in a time when ethical behavior has declined.

Fr. Shenouda Boutros Graduates from the MCD University of Divinity

On Thursday 2nd May 2013 Fr. Shenouda Boutros graduated from the MCD University of Divinity, with a Graduate Diploma in Theology. The graduation ceremony was held at St. Paul’s Cathedral. In attendance were the various deans and lecturers from the different colleges of the MCD University of Divinity, including His Grace Bishop Suriel as the dean of SACOTC, with over 200 graduands in attendance. The ceremony began with the entrance procession of the academic staff. The opening address was given by the Chancellor of the MCD, Dr. Graeme Blackman. In his opening address he made a special mention of the Coptic Orthodox Church congratulating her on celebrating the Holy covenant Thursday giving a special thank you to His Grace Bishop Suriel for attending the graduation ceremony. Fr. Shenouda completed his Graduate Diploma in Theology as a general degree with units of study in New Testament, Greek, Philosophy, Dogmatic theology, Church history, Patristics and Moral theology. Fr. Shenouda has commenced his studies towards his Masters in Theology with a specialty in church canon and moral theology.

SACOTC congratulates Fr. Shenouda on his graduation and wishes him success in his future studies.
Mark Aldarir (The blind)

Ibn Mawhub Ibn Al-Qanbar was an Egyptian Priest (most probably blind) who lived in the 12th Century AD. He was a reformer, yet a controversial figure who opposed some of the practices of the Coptic Church of the time related to the Sacrament of Confession. He insisted that people confess their sins before a priest before having communion and to abandon a common practice at the time, of confession over the censer.

He was excommunicated over this reform and was later accepted back into the Church. He was again excommunicated and joined the Eastern Catholic Church (Melkite) for a while.

Ibn Al-Qanbar loved to teach people about both doctrine of the Church and the Bible. His work includes a commentary on the Pentateuch.

His commentary on Genesis was divided in a way for it to be read during the days of lent and it concentrated on confession, repentance and forgiveness. He wrote in Arabic and his work has never been translated into any other language.

His commentary was an attempt to enlighten his people and lead them in their way with God especially in facing the decline of theological teaching of his day and his desire to educate them in sound doctrine. It tends to show—with a flair of allegorical/typological exegesis—how the book of Genesis bears witness to the Holy Trinity, the ministry of Jesus, the institutions of the Church and the ascetic life. In particular, it bears witness to a set of convictions that the author obviously held very strongly, like confession and willing performance of penance.

Soundings in the commentary reveals an expositor who is more concerned to instruct and shape the lives of his readers/hearers than to probe the literal sense of the text.

My thesis will entail a translation of his commentary on Genesis into English then performing a critical analysis of his commentary.

**Methodology I will use**

The English translation of Ibn Al-Qanbar’s commentary on Genesis will be accompanied by my critical commentary.

The critical commentary will include a concise presentation of Ibn Al-Qanbar’s use of the allegorical method and his key findings for passages that are relevant for his overall purpose, which was the combination of repentance and forgiveness.

I am going to compare his findings with modern western historical-critical analysis and make assessment of the relative value of each.

A consideration of his context and the factors that likely influenced his interpretation will be presented, along with some comparison with modern western contexts and how each affects the way one reads the biblical text.
New Enrolments:

To enrol for the first time in the Diploma in Theology please go to our website www.sacotc.vic.edu.au (studying at SACOTC tab) and download the enrolment form. Please contact our Registrar Jackie Mina on 9874 0388 during business hours or email registrar@sacotc.vic.edu.au to arrange an enrolment interview. Please bring your fully completed form and all certified supporting documents with you e.g. passport, birth certificate, academic transcripts and tax file number (for FEE-HELP).

Re-enrolments:

Please download re-enrolment form from website and email fully completed form to registrar@sacotc.vic.edu.au or post to P.O. Box 1153, Nth Mitcham, Vic 3132

Semester 1, 2014 units

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>DL0144A</td>
<td>Coptic Liturgy - The Canonical Hours in the Coptic Church (Books of Horologion &amp; Psalmody and Euchologion)</td>
<td>Dr Magdi Awad</td>
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This unit will examine the Horologion, Psalmody and Euchologion as used in the Coptic Church. Students will gain insight into the Horologion, which is used twice daily as a part of canonical hours in the Coptic monasteries. The Horologion (Agpya) includes all the prayers, Psalms, Gospel readings, and “troparia” (petitions) to be said at the various hours of the day and night. The book of Psalmody consists of Odes, Psalies, Theotokia and Doxologies. The Euchologion contains the prayers used in the evening and morning offering of incense, and the three anaphoras of Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and Cyril the Great.

CT0164A   | Systematic Theology | Dr Magdi Awad          |

Students undertaking this unit will learn about the three most important sacraments of the Coptic Church; Baptism, Chrism and Eucharist. The major part of this unit will examine the Coptic understanding of the three sacraments and present historical perspectives on their development, and the key elements of Coptic sacramental theology.

AC0214A   | Coptic Language 2 - Bohairic | Dr Magdi Awad          |

Following on from AC0113A Coptic I – Bohairic, this unit will enable students to read and understand, after the completion of two semesters, texts in Bohairic Coptic. Building upon basic skills acquired in the previous unit of study, this unit presents the further grammatical material and vocabulary necessary to be able to read and translate from Bohairic Coptic to English and vice versa.

BA0123A   | Old Testament 1 (on campus) | Dr Amir Malek          |

This unit offers an Introduction to the literature of the Old Testament, and a study of the history and geography of biblical Israel. The topics covered include: manuscripts of the Holy Bible, development of the Old Testament Canon, translation and various interpretive approaches to the Old Testament followed by a study of the Pentateuch.