Our College Realises Another Milestone

St Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College (SACOTC) has a vision of bringing sound Orthodox theological education to the heart of every ministry in the church. History and lived experience proves that a proper theological understanding enhances life, faith, and service, and equips believers to answer the challenges to faith and doctrine posed by the world in which we live. Despite the image sometimes portrayed that theological education is a pursuit for the elite or the theorist, in fact it is the scaffold upon which living faith and service is built.

At SACOTC, we have a philosophy of delivering excellence in teaching and learning. Our philosophy means we will never be satisfied with mediocrity: we will plan for continuous improvement and pursue every opportunity to further the reality of the kingdom of God and enhance and enrich our students in their faith and lives. As part of this process, we are expanding the range, depth and areas of study offered at the College.

We have been a forerunner in delivering online theological education and areas of study unique to the Coptic Orthodox tradition. When SACOTC first applied and gained accreditation and membership of the University of Divinity (then MCD, now UD), it was only accredited to offer the basic award of a Diploma in Theology. In the three years since becoming a member of the University, SACOTC has proved itself as not only an equal partner of the other Colleges, but an innovative contributor. A leading official of the UD recently commented that “in a very short time, member Colleges of the UD have changed from watching SACOTC, to being inspired and excited by it.” In three short years, the College has progressed from offering one award to having the potential to offer four awards.

Since joining the UD, our College has graduated 15 students with a Diploma in Theology. Many of these students have a desire to further their theological education. During the August 7th Academic Board meeting of the UD, SACOTC was approved to increase and upgrade the academic awards it offers. We may now offer the Diploma in Theology Online and an Advanced Diploma in Theology and Ministry in both classroom based and online modes. These proposals were unanimously approved by the Academic Board.

An Advanced Diploma in Theology and Ministry is made up of 16 units of study compared to a Diploma in Theology, which is made up of 8 units. Although both awards have subjects in common, the Advanced Diploma is delivered at a higher level to further develop the student. As the number and variety of units offered by SACOTC increases, choosing only 8 units out of the many interesting subjects on offer is proving difficult for many. The Advanced Diploma will make it possible to study a larger variety of units, and students can choose to either increase the breadth of their knowledge, by taking a variety of units from different areas of study, or to specialise in an area by taking more units from a particular discipline.

Another advantage of the Advanced Diploma in Theology and Ministry is that it is possible to have the subjects studied credited towards a Bachelor of Theology and Ministry. If a student is wise in their subject selection, after completing the Advanced Diploma they may be credited for two of the three years of the Bachelor. This in fact means that even more pathways and awards are now available to our students.

Continued on page 5
From the Dean

It is possible to be a faithful Christian without knowing how to read. But it is impossible to understand the doctrine of the faith without having studied it. Accepting the right ideas, rejecting erroneous theses: this cannot be done by simple faith, but only by faith that has been ripened by scholarship. Virtue, too, is more easily and more speedily attained with the help of knowledge. (Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, 6, 2.)

The words of Clement of Alexandria highlight the great importance of theological education in the life of the Church. This rich tradition of scholarship is being continued at St Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College (SACOTC) through striving toward academic excellence, encouraging personal spirituality, imparting the Orthodox faith, and teaching worship and ministry. The advancement of scholarship at SACOTC has been one of the most defining achievements of 2015. We have increased our faculty, our unit offerings, and our awards to achieve this. I am very pleased to announce that in August, the University of Divinity accredited SACOTC to offer the Diploma in Theology wholly online, and to deliver an Advanced Diploma in Theology and Ministry in face-to-face and online modes.

I am also delighted to inform you that the College’s proposal for a future Centre of Coptic Studies has been formally accepted for inclusion in the University of Divinity’s Strategic Plan (2016-2025). Our goal for the Strategic Plan is to “Establish a centre for Coptic Studies that enhances the quality of theological scholarship, research, and education in Coptic heritage and religious experience, with international partnerships.” Although SACOTC is the newest and smallest College in the University of Divinity, our inclusion in the Strategic Plan reflects our strengthening partnership with the University.

Another new initiative of the College is the development of new Religious Education Curricula. Known as Coptic Orthodox Religious Education (CORE), this department is working toward the formulation of a Religious Education programme for implementation across the Diocese of Melbourne and its Affiliated Regions. This work will emanate from SACOTC.

Finally, I would like to remind you all of the new patristics unit entitled The School of Alexandria, which will be taught by the Very Reverend Father Dr John Behr, the Dean of St Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, and one of the world’s leading Orthodox theologians and patristics scholars. The unit will focus on three prominent Alexandrian theologians, namely Origen, St Athanasius, and St Cyril of Alexandria. This is indeed a rare opportunity not to be missed and I invite you to register your interest for this intensive unit. We are indeed privileged to have Fr John teaching at SACOTC, and look forward to his visit.

As we come to the conclusion of another successful year at SACOTC, I wish to extend to each one of you my congratulations on your academic achievements and my blessings for the future.

Bishop Suriel
Chancellor and Dean
Semester Two has been very positive for SACOTC, with the highest number of unit enrolments, including ten from interstate and one from the UK. This is exciting for all of us in the SACOTC community. It is wonderful to see our College reach increasing numbers of students far and wide, and gratifying to watch as they seek truth through theological education and engage with their faith on a deeper level as a result.

It also reinforces our belief that there is a significant place for theological education, and further encourages our hardworking faculty and staff to continue devoting themselves to creating interesting units and programs of study for our students.

We have spent several months working on new awards and streams of study to make SACOTC more accessible to those interested in studying with us. In 2016, we will be pleased to offer the Diploma in Theology wholly online, and an Advanced Diploma of Theology and Ministry, which can be studied both on campus and online. This has the potential to further open up the global market for the College, as well as creating greater options and flexibility for our students.

This potential growth will of course mean the need to employ more staff and faculty to support our students. We are fortunate to have amazing friends of the College who are regular donors, and their support truly is a gift that ensures the College has continued to grow despite the high costs of running an institution such as this. I hope you will consider becoming a supporter and contributing to our donation program, details of which are on page 7.

For those considering further study, the Diploma in Theology can now be credited towards the Advanced Diploma, and this in turn can be credited toward a Bachelor degree at another college of the University of Divinity. Bachelor students from other colleges of the University of Divinity may also now choose to study individual units at SACOTC as part of their degree.

2016 is indeed shaping up to be a big year. In Semester One, there will be nine units available for students to choose from, including a new unit entitled Uncovering the past: An Archaeology of Christian Egypt. This unit will introduce students to archaeological practice by considering some of the principal Christian sites in Egypt. Please see page 7 for the timetable of units offered in Semester One.

We are also very excited to be hosting the Very Reverend Dr John Behr, the Dean at St Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, who will be teaching a mid-year intensive in late June and early July on The School of Alexandria. Fr John is a very well respected and popular Orthodox scholar in the field of Patristics. His intensive unit will also be open to Bachelor and Master students at the University, so please register your interest for this unit early to avoid missing out. You can read more about this unit on page 8.

Finally, it is with a heavy heart that I inform you that after six and a half wonderful years at SACOTC, this will be my last Registrar’s report. All of the scholastic activity around me has inspired me to become a full-time student myself. While I am excited about this new direction in my life, it has been a very difficult decision to leave. I am genuinely going to miss all of the wonderful people who make up this College – the students, staff, and faculty, and also the many friends of SACOTC, including those from the University of Divinity and the other colleges, with whom I have worked.

It has been an immense privilege to be part of SACOTC, and I am very proud of what has been achieved in such a short time here. I am extremely grateful to His Grace Bishop Suriel for giving me the opportunity to be a small part of this success. It has been an incredible journey and a huge blessing in my life. SACOTC and everyone associated with it have a very special place in my heart, and I will be looking on with anticipation for the great achievements that I know are yet to come.

Thank you all for your humour, encouragement and most of all your friendship during my time here. I wish you all the very best going forward in both your lives and your studies.

Jacqueline Mina
Registrar

The New St Athanasius College Press

SACOTC is in the process of formally establishing its own publishing house. With a newly designed logo and fresh image, SAC Press has now replaced the former St Athanasius Press.

Presently, SAC Press publishes Koinonia and is the joint publisher of the new Coptic Studies Series of books with StVladimir’s Seminary Press (SVS Press). SAC Press aims to be an active publisher of Orthodox books focusing on Theology, Patristics, Coptic Studies, and Oriental Orthodox Studies. His Grace Bishop Suriel is working toward the formation of an Editorial Board for SAC Press, and in the near future, will set up an editorial team to oversee the Press’ operations.
Recently, I was very fortunate to attend, with His Grace Bishop Suriel, the 17th International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford, UK, which took place from 10-14 August 2015. This is an international symposium in which scholars and academics from all over the world participate to present their latest research on studies pertaining to the Church Fathers. The conference first convened in 1951 and is held every four years. This year, there were over one thousand delegates in attendance presenting over 900 papers.

**Day 1**
Having landed in London a couple of days before the conference began, gave us an opportunity to do some essential sight-seeing. The highlight of the day was a visit to the British Library which is the largest library in the world, housing an enormous 170 million items from all over the world! During our visit, we had the great fortune of viewing a 17th century Arabic manuscript of the *Life of St Shenoute*.

**Day 2**
If you are in London and do not visit the British Museum, then you really cannot say that you have been to London at all! This extraordinary museum is one of the largest in the world, and houses the largest collection of Egyptian antiquities outside of Egypt. With more than 100,000 items from Egypt, including the famous Rosetta Stone, the British Museum has impressive artifacts from Pharaonic and Coptic Egypt which we took time to view and enjoy.

Following our Museum tour, we continued on to Oxford. Oxford’s medieval buildings, history, its unmistakable Christian foundation, and the living tradition of the academic town was fascinating and endearing. One of our first stops in Oxford was the Blackwell Bookstore, a bibliophile’s delight with five large floors to explore. We stayed at St Mary’s College – which I discovered, is where the movie Harry Potter was filmed – also known as ‘Hogwarts’, which explained why there were thousands of teenage tourists everywhere. The room accommodation was very monastic; minimalistic, actually, in its features, with a bathroom (which was more like a cupboard) that allowed only one leg in at a time, but I could understand how the room was conducive to study.

**Day 3**
A traditional garden party marked the informal start of the conference and it was a great opportunity to meet scholars who are leading academics in their fields. The conference officially commenced with the first plenary lecture, given by the President of the North American Patristics Society, Professor Susanna Elm, entitled “From Origo to Sin: Augustine of Hippo and the Late Roman Slave Trade.” This opening session was held at the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, which was the first church founded in Oxford and is traditionally where the opening lecture is delivered.

**Days 4-7**
The remaining four days of the conference contained a series of interesting short communications and workshops. The challenge was to choose which communication to attend. This was difficult, as there were up to twelve sessions running concurrently, each in a different room and sometimes in different colleges around Oxford. Each communication ran for twenty minutes, and one was required, literally, to run from one session to the next! The lectures, communications and workshops included so many excellent and varied topics that ranged from scripture, politics, history, language, monasticism, liturgy, and my favourite, ethics, all of which were examined through the eyes of the Church Fathers. One of the interesting communications I attended was entitled “Virtue in Cyril of Alexandria’s Festal Letters,” presented by Dr Hans van Loon from the Centre for Patristic Research in The Netherlands. He discussed Cyril’s emphasis on virtue in the moral life of his audience and as part of his pastoral theology. One of the beautiful reasons Cyril gives for upholding virtue is that, “When we live virtuously, we may approach God.”
What an encouraging and inspiring call to the life of virtue. During the conference, St Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary (SVOTS) held a gathering in which the Very Reverend Fr Dr John Behr launched new initiatives by SVOTS. One of those initiatives is the new Coptic Studies Series of books. The first book in this series will be The Life of Repentance and Parity, by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, of blessed memory, and translated into English by His Grace Bishop Suriel. This book will be published in March 2016. His Grace was invited to address the forum where he spoke about the Coptic Studies Series, and of forging the relationship between SVOTS and SACOTC. Following this gathering, we attended the launch of Dr Ken Parry’s (Macquarie University, Sydney) new book The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Patristics.

We also attended the Asia-Pacific Early Christian Studies Society (APECSS) gathering. It was nice to socialise with fellow Australians and meet some inspiring and committed young students from across Asia. Professor Pauline Allen (Australian Catholic University, Brisbane), announced the upcoming APECSS conference in September 2016, that will be held in St Petersburg, Russia which sounds exciting.

On the final day of the symposium, His Grace Bishop Suriel presented his communication entitled “Highlights of the Arabic Manuscripts of the Life of St Shenoute of Atripe,” where he provided an overview of the twenty-two extant Arabic manuscripts of the Life of Shenoute, many of which are unedited and unpublished. He also outlined the importance of conducting a critical edition and translation of the works.

Days 8-9

After attending such an amazing conference we travelled to Stevenage to attend the annual Summer Youth Convention, hosted by His Grace Bishop Angaelos. The theme of the convention was Revive: Be Led and Lead, and marked twenty years of youth ministry in Stevenage. His Grace Bishop Suriel was invited to give two presentations at the convention.

My final thoughts on the Oxford Patristic Conference:

Christopher Hall in his book Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers eloquently wrote:

Patristic theology is occasionally complex, and understandably so, because the God who reveals himself to us in Scripture, worship, prayer, and the sacraments is complex. Complexity, however, is different from confusion, and the reader who slowly chews on Athanasius’ understanding of the incarnation or Augustine’s thoughts on the Christian’s hope for the future will discover flavors, textures and nourishment that may well last a lifetime. Welcome to the feast!

I found the conference stimulating, inspirational, and motivating. I highly encourage those who are interested in the study of the early Church Fathers to attend the next International Patristic Conference which will be held at Oxford in 2019. Personally, I look forward to attending future symposia and enjoying the feast that is patristic theology.

Fr Shenouda Boutros
College Chaplain

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**SACOTC Realises Another Milestone**

*Continued from page 1*

Existing students will notice that the subject codes on previously offered units have changed – students may now choose the level at which they wish to study. The Australian Qualification Framework sets awards levels from 5 to 10. Each level has expected outcomes and graduate attributes. SACOTC, with the encouragement of the UD Academic Board, has been asked to reclassify its subjects so that they sit at Bachelor level 1, 2 and 3.

Despite our College only being able to offer Diploma and Advanced Diploma awards at this stage, our units will now be recognised by other Colleges and outside institutions as Bachelor level subjects. For example, a student may elect to study a unit and be assessed at a Level 2, while another student studying the same unit has elected to study at Level 1. Both students will be exposed to the same content, but the Level 2 student will be expected to exhibit a deeper understanding of the material; in doing so, the student will not only be credited for a unit towards their Diploma and/or Advanced Diploma, but could also use this unit in the future to gain credit for a second year subject in a Bachelor of Theology (or as an elective in another course).

In gaining approval to offer the Diploma and Advanced Diploma wholly online, SACOTC now has the potential to attract students from around the world, who are keen to take advantage of the gift that is St Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College.

The future looks very bright. In the not too distant future, we hope to bring you news of not only more units on offer, but possibly postgraduate awards and more outreach.

We thank our Lord God who continually strengthens us and grants us more than we ask for or can imagine.

*Fr Daniel Ghabrial*

Coursework Coordinator

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**University of Divinity Graduation Date**

Friday 18 March 2016 at 7:30pm at St Paul’s Cathedral, Melbourne.

Students who are eligible to graduate should have received a letter from the University of Divinity with instructions on how to register for graduation.

If you have not received this letter, please contact the SACOTC Registrar by 23 November 2015.
Visit of the Vice-Chancellor

On 21 August 2015, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Divinity, Professor Peter Sherlock, and Director of Administration, Jeff Reaney, visited our College and met with His Grace Bishop Suriel and Paul Hoy from the College Council. The meeting was to discuss the future direction of the College. During their visit, they were given a tour of the iconography studio, in which several icons were being prepared for the new church in the Eporo Tower. Professor Sherlock, who has quite an interest in iconography, was visibly impressed with the work of iconographer Ashraf Gerges and his assistants. In an email to His Grace, Professor Sherlock commented that he was “deeply moved to see the Coptic tradition so vibrantly represented, and honoured to view so much work in progress.”

Effective Writing Skills Seminar

On 26 September 2015, a seminar on effective essay writing skills was conducted for the students of our College. Rev Dr John Capper, the Director of Learning at the University of Divinity, presented the Seminar.

The day began with the Divine Liturgy celebrated by His Grace Bishop Suriel at St Athanasius Church. It was the first time Dr Capper had attended a Coptic Liturgy, and even with a number of Coptic priests in attendance, no one could compete with Dr Capper’s impressive beard! After some breakfast and wonderful fellowship with the clergy, staff and students, the seminar began.

The seminar took the form of a workshop and was attended by both students and faculty. Dr Capper’s entertaining and informative presentation style provided for stimulating, informative and interactive discussions. With so many students at SACOTC coming from non-humanities backgrounds, where essay writing is not the norm, this seminar was both welcomed and appreciated.

Dr Capper highlighted the importance of “unpacking the essay question” – a point many students, myself included, struggle with. He mentioned that when writing an essay, students need to demonstrate an understanding of the important elements, concepts and theories of the subject in order to develop a complete response. The next, and perhaps the most important component of the essay is the research. He suggested that it is worthwhile to begin research by reading a general overview on the topic. These can be found in respected encyclopaedias, or specialist dictionaries. Google’s Advanced Search, and Google Scholar can be helpful tools that provide the student with a good starting point.

Dr Capper also highlighted the three steps students must to take when conducting research — explore, analyse, reflect. A complete essay is not one that merely responds to the question; it is one that incorporates relevant aspects and uses them to nourish the argument. Finally, reference, reference, reference! Now that the theory is done, the next step is to write a great essay.

On behalf of the students at SACOTC, I wish to thank Dr Capper for his invaluable instruction.

Abanoub Elyas
Student, Diploma of Theology
Papal Knighthood Conferred on Paul Hoy

It is with great honour that we congratulate Paul Hoy, who is an important member of our College Council, on receiving a papal knighthood. On 15 October 2015, Denis Hart, the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne conferred the papal honour of Knight of the Order of Saint Gregory the Great upon Paul Hoy, at a ceremony held at the Australian Catholic University. Among many of Paul’s extraordinary achievements was his championing for the establishment of the Australian Catholic University, and hence he is considered a founding father of this great institution. His Grace Bishop Suriel represented the College at the ceremony. It gives us much joy to congratulate Paul on receiving this merited honour.

Timetable of Units on Offer in Semester One 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DL2410A</td>
<td>Coptic Art and Iconography II</td>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>Monday 7-9:30pm</td>
<td>Ashraf Gerges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AL1200A</td>
<td>Coptic Language 1 - Bohairic</td>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>Tuesday 7-9:30pm</td>
<td>Fr Gregorios Awad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CH1200A</td>
<td>Christianity in Egypt: Post Arab Conquest</td>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>Wednesday 7-9:30pm</td>
<td>Dr Youhanna Youssef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BN1600A</td>
<td>New Testament 1: A Patristic Approach</td>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>Wednesday 7-9:30pm</td>
<td>Shaheer Sedhom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DL1420A</td>
<td>Introduction to the Coptic Liturgical Year</td>
<td>On campus</td>
<td>Thursday 7-9:30pm</td>
<td>Fr Gregorios Awad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA1109A</td>
<td>Old Testament I: A Patristic Approach</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Amir Malek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP1609A</td>
<td>Introduction to Christian Counselling</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fr Abanoub Attalla &amp; Dr Samir Ibrahim</td>
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<tr>
<td>DA1109A</td>
<td>Challenges in Contemporary Youth Ministry</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td>His Grace Bishop Suriel</td>
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<tr>
<td>AH1145A</td>
<td>Uncovering the Past: An Archaeology of Christian Egypt</td>
<td>Intensive</td>
<td>* See below for dates</td>
<td>Lisa Agaiby</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Pre-semester Intensive: 5-7 Feb, 12-14 Feb, 19-21 Feb (Fri 7pm-10pm, Sat 9am-3pm, Sun 2pm-5pm)
Start of Semester One: Monday 22 February 2016
Census date: Tuesday 15 March 2016
Mid Semester Break: 21 March – 1 April 2016
End of Semester One: 27 May 2016

Support St Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College

Education is the key for future generations to ensure the continuation of our cultural and spiritual heritage. SACOTC is a growing college, and only with your generous support can we hope to fulfil the dreams of a very bright future. Your tax deductible donation, no matter how small, can make a difference to the quality of our lecturers and the education which our students receive, and ultimately bequeath a legacy that will endure for many years to come. Your donations will provide a vital flow of monies for the College and its immediate needs, helping us to sustain our facilities, support our faculty, and supply students with scholarships.

It was the dream of the great saint Archdeacon Habib Girgis to see theological education in the Coptic Orthodox Church reach the highest academic levels. By the grace of God, we have continued this journey and through your gracious support generations of men and women will receive quality Orthodox theological education through SACOTC. The importance of the contributions made by the early Church Fathers, saints, and scholars to the traditions which we hold dear is significant. Therefore, it is important to recognise and appreciate these contributions by continuing the tradition.

Special Intensive Unit on The School of Alexandria

SACOTC is honoured to offer an exciting new intensive unit entitled The School of Alexandria by renowned Orthodox theologian and Dean of St Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York, the Very Reverend Dr John Behr.

The unit will focus on three prominent Alexandrian theologians, namely Origen, St Athanasius, and St Cyril I, and will be offered over three weekends in June to July 2016.

The course will consist of lectures on general context and theology, and seminar-style close reading of selected texts.

We encourage all those with an interest in the early Church Fathers to enrol in this unit. We also welcome undergraduate and postgraduate students from the University of Divinity. Please see below for course and enrolment details.

SACOTC has partnered with Yarra Theological Union to offer the unit at the following levels:

**SACOTC**
- Undergraduate
- Unit code: CH1415A (Level 1)
- Unit code: CH2415A (Level 2)

**Yarra Theological Union**
- Graduate and Post Graduate
- Venue: St Athanasius Coptic Orthodox Theological College
- Dates: 24-26 June, 1-3 July, and 8-10 July 2016
- Times: Friday 7pm-10pm
- Saturday 9am-3pm
- Sunday 2pm-5pm

**Undergraduate Students**
For more information on enrolling in this unit as an undergraduate, please email the SACOTC Registrar at registrar@sacotc.vic.edu.au or phone 03 8872 8452.

**Postgraduate Students**
To enrol in this unit as a postgraduate student, please email the YTU Registrar at registrar@ytu.edu.au or phone 03 9890 3771 ext. 1.

SVS Press to Launch First Book in the Coptic Studies Series

As joint publisher of SVS Press’ new Coptic Studies Series, SAC Press is pleased to announce the forthcoming publication of the first book in this series, entitled The Life of Repentance and Purity.

Authored by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III of blessed memory, and first translated by His Grace Bishop Suriel in 1991, this Coptic Studies Series publication offers a fresh new translation by His Grace, with substantial additions and patristic references.

*The Life of Repentance and Purity* will be officially launched at St Vladimir’s Seminary on 12 March 2016.
Have you ever read the *Vita Antonii*? Do you know what the *Historia Lausiaca* is? Have you ever been entertained by stories of the pilgrims in the *Historia Monachorum* who, in their mission to seek out the great fathers of the Egyptian desert, almost drowned in a swamp and were chased by crocodiles on their way to Nitria which was considered the best known of all the monasteries of Egypt? Have you ever taken a journey back in time to see what life was really like in a Pachomian koinonia, or to feel the crack of a whip in one of Shenoute’s female coenobia? These are just some of the fascinating things we discovered in this unit.

Through studying *Early Egyptian Monasticism* at SACOTC, we were given a very detailed picture of what monastic life was like in the golden eras of the fourth and fifth centuries. We not only learned about the lives of great saints like Antony, Macarius, Pachomius, and Shenoute, but we also uncovered an unfathomable level of detail and information about these great holy men. We also learned about other prominent fathers such as Amoun of Nitria, and the controversial Nitrian Four Tall Brothers – about whom we had previously known nothing – and found their stories to be very interesting and intriguing.

By studying the original primary sources and journals of some of the great pilgrims who visited the Desert Fathers of Egypt, such as Palladius, John Cassian, and the seven pilgrims from the Mount of Olives, a more detailed and thorough image of what life as a monk in fourth and fifth century Egypt was created. Indeed, at times one would imagine oneself dwelling amongst the fathers in the monastic settlements, because the eye-witness accounts presented in the primary sources were so detailed and vivid.

Some questions we tackled included whether Antony was really the first monk, and did Athanasius have a hidden agenda in writing the *Vita Antonii*? Did Jerome write the *Vita Pauli* to challenge the primacy of Antony? Why is so little known about the monastic settlements founded by Amoun in Nitria and Kellia if they were considered the most famous monastic communities in the fourth century? Was it easier to live a semi-anchoritic life in the desert or a coenobitic life within a monastic community? Why was Pachomius considered an effective CEO? Why were the rules of Shenoute so strict? What was life in the female monastic coenobia really like? And how did life in a fourth century monastery differ from that of life in a monastery nowadays? Questions such as these and many others were discussed in great depth and detail.

I would definitely recommend this unit not only to those who have an interest in the lives of the Desert and Monastic Fathers and Mothers, but also to those who want to learn about Church history and spirituality. Studying the lives and stories of these monastics really sets the benchmark and standard for leading a spiritual life. Learning firsthand from their deeds and wisdom is something that will stay with me forever: their stories and advice are not only inspirational, but applicable to life in the twenty-first century for all people from all different walks of life.

I thank His Grace Bishop Suriel, who recommended that I undertake this unit, for his continuous support and prayers. I would also like to thank our lecturer, Lisa Agaiby, who was always approachable and willing to share her vast knowledge, and went above and beyond her duties as a lecturer to not only help and encourage our class, but also to be a great friend and support to us throughout the semester.

*Abanoub Mikhail*
*Student, Diploma of Theology*
The purpose of the SACOTC library is twofold: to meet the needs of the students of the College and to develop a comprehensive collection of books and journals relating to Orthodoxy. Originally run by volunteers, the library has had a permanent librarian since January 2013. The original collection – which was donated to the College in the year 2000 by St Mary’s Coptic Orthodox Church Melbourne – has been greatly enhanced by the donation of books and financial gifts. The library now holds about 4,000 books on a range of subjects: Theology, Patristics, Biblical Studies, Church History, Coptic Studies and Counselling. Exciting times are ahead as we begin preparations for establishing a second library at the Eporo Tower campus. This new library will be eye-catching, with floor-to-ceiling etched glass windows to the north and brightly coloured furniture.

The latest in automated borrowing technology and security will be installed, enabling students to use the library any time the College is open. Students will also benefit from wi-fi access and individual study carrels with power outlets. In keeping with the technological theme, electronic mobile shelving will house the library’s book collection. It is hoped that each library will hold a unique collection of titles, available to the students of both campuses through standard or inter-library loans. This means that a large number of books will need to be purchased in the next few years to fill the shelves at the new library. As the demands on the new library become known, the librarian will prepare a list of books that “Friends of the Library” may wish to donate. Donors may purchase books themselves or provide the funds to buy one or more books. There will also be an option to donate a book commemoratively. A bookplate will be placed inside books donated in any of these ways.

The library was recently the recipient of a generous donation from Mina and Lillyan Andrews: the entire St Vladimir’s Seminary Press Popular Patristics Series, containing around fifty volumes. These books are a welcome addition to the collection and are on permanent display in the library. We thank Mina and Lillyan for their thoughtful gift.

New Books

The current collection of books at the library in Donvale is developing as the unit offerings at SACOTC increase in number and diversity. This semester, the College offered a unit entitled Early Monasticism in Egypt. A number of books were purchased to support the learning requirements of the students studying this unit. These new books include the following titles: The Canons of Our Fathers: Monastic Rules of Shenoute, by Bentley Layton (Oxford University Press, 2014); The Book of the Elders: Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Systematic Collection, edited by John Wortley (Cistercian Publications, 2012); and Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery: Egyptian Monasticism in Late Antiquity, by Rebecca Krawiec (Oxford University Press, 2002). These titles will supplement the existing collection of books on monasticism held by the library.

Librarian’s Report

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Deborah Decru
Librarian

Farewell to Our Registrar

After six and a half years at SACOTC, our College Registrar, Jacqueline Mina, will sadly be leaving us in order to pursue her passion for the study of natural medicine full time. Jackie has been an active member of our College and assisted with the accreditation process, the organisation of events and symposia, and has always been a delight with students and staff alike. She will continue being a valued member of our College Council, and on behalf of SACOTC, I wish to thank Jackie for her invaluable contribution to our Theological College and wish her every success in her studies and new career.

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Bishop Suriel
As a preliminary step to forming a Diocese-wide Department of Religious Education that will be closely affiliated with SACOTC, a conference took place on 30 August 2015, to discuss Coptic Orthodox Religious Education (CORE) in the Diocese of Melbourne and its Affiliated Regions. The meeting was attended by a representative group from each parish and its aims were to share a proposed vision for Religious Education and discuss a new Sunday School curriculum and continual development courses.

His Grace Bishop Suriel commenced the day with prayer. He then shared the proposed vision and structure for parish Religious Education, with the mission of CORE being:

1. To promote excellence in catechesis during the formative years of child development, and to provide subsequent comprehensive youth and adult Religious Education programs, with the aim of enabling the lifelong formation of the person in mind, spirit, and will. This will be according to the word of God in the Bible and the teachings and traditions of the Coptic Orthodox faith;
2. To support local parishes with planning, developing, implementing and evaluating the programs, systems, resources and materials for the religious education of the person at every stage of their life journey, from child to youth to adult;
3. To support, motivate, encourage, train and prepare leaders and educators for their mission of Religious Education;
4. To assist in the administration and implementation of these programs both on a Diocese-wide level and local parish level.

Following this, His Grace shared proposed Diocese and parish level structures for Religious Education which include a Director of Religious Education and three Offices at the Diocese level (Office of Teaching and Learning, Office of Religious Educator Continual Development and the Office of Religious Education Administration), as well as a full-time Religious Education Coordinator at each parish. His Grace then shared two short-term goals for CORE:

1. To create a framework for Sunday School Teacher development by the end of 2016;
2. To create a Prep – Year 12 Sunday School curriculum scope and sequence by the end of 2016.

The attendees then provided detailed feedback on the proposal, which will be rigorously considered when forming the strategic plan for CORE.

Furthermore, there are future plans to offer more Religious Education units at SACOTC that will be of great benefit to all religious educators. It is our hope that this department will initially support the Sunday School ministry across the diocese with later plans to support youth and adult Religious Education programs.

The CORE leadership group is continuing to evaluate the feedback on the proposed vision and structure, as well as closely examine the responses from the various activities during the day, in order to alter the proposal as required. CORE would like to thank all the clergy, superintendents, and teachers of Sunday School for attending the session and providing their valuable input.

Michael Salib
CORE Coordinator
The construction work on Eporo Tower, which is located in the heart of Melbourne’s CBD, is progressing very well. The Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne will own four and a half floors of the 44 storey tower. This is around 3,000 square metres of space. One of those floors will house the city campus of SACOTC.

The building has progressed well beyond the campus level in the construction phase. Tradesmen have already begun work on the plumbing and electrical cabling, as well as the markings for the design of the SACOTC floor. Iconographer, Ashraf Gerges, has been commissioned to begin the 700 square metres of iconography paintings on the Diocese owned floors, in addition to designing the twelve stained glass windows and the large mosaic in the foyer.

Further updates will appear in the next issue of Koinonia.

Update on the City Campus at Eporo Tower