



## FASCINATING COIN COLLECTION IS LAUNCHED!

On Saturday 28 February and Sunday 1 March, the Museum launched its permanent collection of over eighty coins spanning 330 BC to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Throughout the two days, the Museum was buzzing with people from all ages and different backgrounds. The research on the coins was carried out by Sandy Saad, a member of St Mark's Church and an active volunteer in the Museum. (see second page).

True to the Museum's promotional, visitors discovered that coins not only have a monetary value, but they are also a physical connection to the past, telling tales of power, culture and civilization. They record and recall history and the evolution a nation's or empire's history and its stated cultural and political values. Coins can give clues about the future and can explain why things are the way they are today and may also be appreciated for their artistic value. And you never know who touched a coin, but it can open doors to imagination!

The collection's oldest coin of Alexander the Great dates 330BC. The collection includes coins from the Hellenistic

ages, Ancient Israel, the following empires: Roman, Parthian, Byzantine Sassanian, Mongol and Ottoman, and Islamic and Muhammed Ali Dynasties ending with the most recent coins of the Arab Republic of Egypt with images of Tutankhamum and Cleopatra VII. A visitor noted: "This is a unique collection because we can follow the history of a region and country across its many periods. We are likely to see the coins displayed a particular historic periods but not oversuchawidetime." In a time of economic turbulence, St. Mark's

Museum's exhibition offers a different viewpoint on coins. This exhibition gives perspective on the past, calling the viewer to think about what kind of legacy coins leave behind for the future. Visitors can explore the stories behind each coin: how Alexander the Great used coins to propagate his conquests and legacy, how portraiture was developed throughout the ages, how calligraphy was designed and used in Islamic dynasty coins, what kind of coins Judas got for betraying Jesus, how the production of coins was influenced (as today) by their economic times, and *more....*

The coin collection remains in the permanent collection of the Museum. Appointments to view the exhibition and other artefacts may be by email or by telephone – see below, (second page).



## VOLUNTEERS RECOGNIZED

The programme of St. Mark's Church's Pre-Lent Dinner on February 22, 2009, listed two items as "Surprises"... and surprises they were! Four Museum volunteers were recognised for their service to the Museum in its role to preserve our cultural heritage.

**GRACY SAEED** received the *Ontario Young Heritage Leaders*

*Program 2008*

award designed to recognize the outstanding contributions that young people under 18 years of age are making to local heritage preservation.

Gracy received the award plaque from The Honourable Michael Chan, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Father Marcos Marcos had this to say about Gracy when he announced that she has received this award from the Ontario Government: "Many of you may not know that almost forty members of our congregation serve as volunteers in different capacities in the Museum. You may also not know how young some of them start. One such volunteer started when she was 13 years old – in grade 6. Gracy Saeed first assisted with photographing the Museum collection. Then she assisted and continues to serve with updating the email lists. Because of her keenness she began to volunteer as a Museum Interpreter when she was 15 years old. This requires studying about Coptic art and history and being able to communicate to visitors about our Coptic heritage. Despite her age, she has been able to effectively communicate with people of different ages not only from our congregation but people from diverse cultures who visit the Museum. Her dedication also spread beyond the walls of the Museum. For example, when she was on a church choir visit to another city she decided that she would like to present a power point presentation about the Museum. It was so effective that members of that community organised a group tour to the Museum!"

The second "surprise" of the evening was when Fr. Marcos called on **DR. HELENE MOUSSA**, to receive an "Outstanding Volunteer Service Award...in Appreciation

for Your Exceptional Dedication". Fr. Marcos outlined Helene's career and volunteer service in the Museum for the past 10 years, which includes promoting Coptic studies at the university of Toronto and giving papers at various international conferences on the Museum's collection and Coptic art. Then Fr. Marcos called on Helene to introduce the next two "surprises" of the night. All three awards were presented by The Right Honourable Jim Karygiannis, MP for Scarborough and Agincourt.

Helene pointed out that "... with the exception of five artefacts, **all** the artefacts in the Museum are donations. All but one artefact have been from members of our congregation and Coptic friends in Egypt. Tonight we recognize one of these donors who is also an active Museum volunteer: **YOUSSEF MISHRIKY** not only for his most generous donation of a substantial coin collection but also his absolutely invaluable assistance towards the research required to catalogue the collection. He not only shared with incredible generosity the vast knowledge he has in the field of Numismatics but also the resources in his library. Youssef also donated books to the Museum's Reference Library and the equipment we needed to analyse coins. In this process he has been an inspiring and encouraging teacher. He did not stop there either, Youssef sponsored a funding grant for the Museum from American Express Charities Aid Foundation. I am happy to say that the grant was accepted."

In humour Helene said that while we were most grateful for the collection of coins Youssef offered the Museum, we really did not know what to do with them as they would require very specialized skills to research and catalogue. So they rested in the Church's safe for over two years, until "**SANDY SAAD**, a member of our congregation and volunteer in the Museum, and student in the Arts Management Programme, U of T Scarborough campus, offered to take up the challenge through her University

*CO-OP requirement to be employed in a part-time professional position. We suggested that she should first try to take a course that would give her the framework for cataloguing a coin collection. There was no such course in the University of Toronto. Nevertheless with her unusual determination, Sandy managed to create an independent research course supervised by a University professor and with the informal assistance by Mr Youssef Mishriki. Needless to say Sandy did very well. The Museum then applied for funding from Young Works Canada Heritage Program and gratefully received 75% of Sandy's salary. The Museum through St. Mark's Church carried the remainder of the cost.*

*Last summer, Sandy Saad worked at least twice as many hours than the specified seventeen weeks of her contract. She did a monumental piece of research to catalogue the coins. The University of Toronto recognised her by awarding her the "Tin Sun Tang Memorial in Arts Management". Sandy's dedication did not stop there. She even worked as a volunteer during her recent Christmas holidays completing the research of a smaller collection of coins the Museum received and assisting with the display of the coins. And, two weeks ago she assisted in the training of the Museum's Interpreters/Guides when she not only impressed us with the knowledge she had acquired, but also her enthusiasm about all that coins tell us was literally contagious!*

### Photos captions top to bottom

1. The Honourable Michael Chan, MPP, Minister of Immigration, Fr. Marcos Marcos and Gracy Saeed.
2. The Honourable Jim Karigianis, MP for Scarborough and Agincourt, Helene Moussa, Youssef Mishriki and Fr. Marcos Marcos.
3. The Honourable Jim Karygiannis MP for Scarborough and Agincourt, Sandy Saad, Helene Moussa and Fr. Marcos Marcos.

