



Dr. Bedour Latif (1921-2012) and Dr. Youssef Nassif (1920-2014) “Four eyes and two brushes” – six decades of shared spirituality



St. Mark's Coptic Museum's is dedicating this Newsletter to the life and work of Drs Bedour Latif and Youssef Nassif, two “icons” of neo-Coptic iconography.

Youssef and Bedour met and were married when they were students. They “wrote”/painted icons since the early 1950s in churches in Egypt and the lands of immigration, some which are:

- in Egypt St Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in El Abasseya, Cairo among many other church across the country;
- in Canada: Toronto and Montreal St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Churches;
- in the US: Rhodes Island (St. Mary and Mari Mena Church 1992); Atlanta (St. Mary's Church); Texas (St. Anthony); and
- in Australia: Archangel Michael and St. Anthony Coptic Orthodox Church.

The icons on the iconostasis at St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church, Scarborough, were completed in 1987 and those on the North and South walls in 1988 — a total of forty-one icons in addition to the fresco in the Royal Altar niche of Christ Pantocrator. All these icons may be viewed in the Museum's website:

St. Mark's Coptic Museum's collection also displays two of their icons: The Burial of Christ (originally in the Abbaseya Cathedral Church) and St. Theodor (Amir Tadros).

Bedour and Youssef always signed their icons jointly. When asked how they worked this out in actual practice? This was their answer:

- Bedour: “We met in art and live and work in that harmony.”
- Youssef: “Four eyes can see more than two! When Bedour steps out of the studio, I may touch up what she has done and she does the same if I step out as well... but we always reflect on our work when we are together.”



The Last Supper, St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church, Scarborough

Their final work is a true unity of their brushes and Coptic spirituality.

St Mark's Church and Museum are truly blessed to have the “richness” of the spirituality as expressed Youssef and Bedour's art that will be shared for many generations to come. May their souls rest in peace.

¹. A more detailed article on the life and work of Drs. Bedour Latif and Youssef Nassif may be found in the Museum's Newsletter Volume 3, Fall 2007 (see website “Publications”). Upon hearing of the passing away Dr. Youssef Nassif in October of 2013 the museum published a memorial pamphlet in English and Arabic to honour the memory of both Youssef and Bedour. (see website “Publications”). A book was also produced for Dr. Youssef's 40th Commemoration Day in Egypt and is available in the Museum's Cecile Barsoum Reference Library

Sacred Stitches – Beauty and Holiness in the Needlework of Many Faiths (October 24-November 1, 2013)

Between October 24 and November 1, 2013 St. James Anglican Cathedral in Toronto exhibited one hundred and fifteen ecclesiastical embroideries and textiles from across Ontario's multicultural society. The purpose of the exhibition was to "... celebrate the growing awareness and recognition of the role of embroidery and textile art has played in the creation of beauty and atmosphere for worship down through the ages; [as well as] to celebrate women who have given so much of themselves in its creation." Over 3,500 people were able to admire and learn about the "beauty and holiness" these works. One of the most stunning works displayed just as one entered the nave of the cathedral was a beautifully stitched icon of the Theotokos and the Divine Child — a gift to Christ the Saviour Russian Orthodox Cathedral (Toronto) by its creator, Irina Dubov. St. Mark's Coptic Museum also loaned the cape and Taylasan Fr. Marcos wore when he first ministered to the Copts in Canada.

The idea of the exhibit was inspired by the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Anglican Church Women's Needleworkers' Guild, Diocese of Toronto, Anglican Church of Canada. An exhibition of their works was also mounted in the Archives and Museum of the Cathedral Centre. Present were women from this group who have been coming every week for over 40 years to work together in the creation of vestments, linens, and other items as needed to enhance and beautify the services of not only the Anglican church in Toronto, but those of many other faiths across the continent.



Cape and Taylasan of Fr. Marcos worn when he first came to Toronto (1964)

World Day of Prayer Visitors

On November 21, 2013 St. Mark's Coptic Museum hosted twenty-five members of the National Board and staff of the Women's Inter-church Council of Canada (WICC). The purpose of their visit was to learn more about the Coptic Church because Egypt was selected by the International Committee of the World Day of Prayer as the focus for 2014. Alice Hanna and Helene Moussa offered our visitors a special tour of the Museum highlighting the continuity of art and culture in the past 2014 years. Our guests also spent time in St. Mark's Church where Fr. Ammonius Guirguis informed them about the Coptic liturgy, spirituality and ministry and Helene Moussa explained the symbolism of Coptic art and architecture in a Coptic Church.



For more information on WICC and the Word Day of Prayer visit website: www.wicc.org