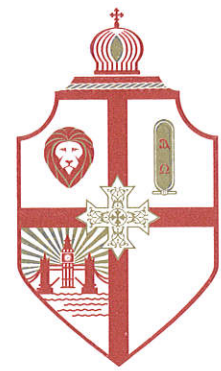


# Coptic Orthodox Diocese of London



**“A city set on a hill cannot be hidden”  
(Matthew 5:14)**

My dear Fathers, sisters, brothers and children in the Lord.

Grace and peace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ during this blessed Lenten period, in which we prepare ourselves to celebrate His glorious and victorious Resurrection.

I give thanks to God for this exciting new journey on which we have embarked together over the past three months since the establishment of our Coptic Orthodox Diocese of London, and ask His blessing upon our road ahead. It is good for us to have milestones at which we prayerfully and thankfully reflect on our service, and this one is as good as any for us to look deeper at how God has already begun to shape His ministry, and bless the foundations of what we hope and pray is still to come.

I have been blessed to be able to celebrate the Divine Liturgy with you at all our parishes across the diocese, and plan to pray at each parish at least twice more this year, as well as celebrating at least one Feast and a Liturgy on the Feast of its patron saint. I am hoping that we can celebrate each parish's patron saint's feast together as a community, so that we are able to visit and share more frequently with one another. A parish liturgy schedule has been agreed to the end of June, as well as my Holy Week schedule and Feasts to the end of the year. These will all be made available on our diocesan website [www.CopticOrthodox.London](http://www.CopticOrthodox.London) in the coming weeks. This is a wonderful opportunity for me to be available to you and meet with you on a regular basis, and above all for us to pray and gather together in the spirit of the early Church, coming together “with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1).

So far, our Clergy Council, comprising of myself and the reverend fathers, has met monthly to discuss current and future parish and diocesan ministry, and we have an ongoing agenda, especially focussed on Christian Education and Formation, and creating a greater sense of community across the diocese. It has been a pleasure working towards a shared vision for the future of our collective ministry, and God is already blessing this work greatly. Each of the Fathers now has a designated diocese-wide responsibility which will also be published on our website. Fr Antonious Thabet has been appointed as Diocesan Vicar-General, as have Fr Isaak Ibrahim as Vicar for Christian Education and Fr Shenouda Asham as Vicar for administrative matters. I give thanks for the commitment I see in our Clergy for you, one-another, and for the diocese as a whole.

One of our major objectives is to establish renewed Sunday School, Youth, Young Adult and Servants' Preparation curricula, as well as to reinvigorate our Theological College. Priests have been tasked with each of these areas, and a meeting will be held later this year with Christian Education and Youth servants to create working groups to take this initiative forward.

A very exciting day that is coming up is our first Diocesan Spiritual Day for all the family on Saturday 2 June 2018 at our Coptic Orthodox Church Centre in Stevenage. I do hope everyone can join us for this day, which, God willing, will lead to an Annual Diocesan Weekend Retreat commencing in 2019. This will allow us to live in the spirit of those who followed our Lord so faithfully as they “continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

Youth ministry has always formed a core part of my personal passion, vision and ministry for our Church here in the United Kingdom, and with the new diocese, youth ministry can flourish with extra cooperation and coordination between all the parishes. We have held monthly Joint Youth Committee (JYC) meetings, and have finalised the Coptic Youth Mission (CYM) schedule for the remainder of the year. This is available via [www.CopticYouthMission.com](http://www.CopticYouthMission.com) and [www.CopticOrthodox.London](http://www.CopticOrthodox.London).

ἸΜΟΝΥΨΟΜ ἸΤΕ ΟΥΒΑΚΙ ΧΩΠ ΕΣΧΗ ΕΙΖΕΝ ΟΥΤΩΣ | *A city set on a hill cannot be hidden*

We have just completed a wonderful weekend conference which was attended by 175 10-13 year-old children from across our parishes, who were in turn served by a team of more than 50 servants. After our Diocesan Enthronement service, this was the first time for collaboration and cooperation across the parishes, which was joyful, uplifting and seamlessly unified.

It is imperative and core to the vision of our diocese that everyone feels a true sense of belonging and ownership within its family, and I do hope, as time goes on, that there will be more ways to engage with and serve each individual through the variety of ministries already available, as well as others to be established in the future. My hope and prayer is that every member of our diocese feels valued and catered for, and for this reason, I am now tasking a group to lead a new initiative called MyChurch, which will aim to map our current situation, as well as detect potential gaps and facilitate the implementation of ministry strands that will hopefully serve as many of us as humanly possible. In this we endeavour to ensure that there is a place for every member of the Body of Christ, "joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, [bringing about the] growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:16).

Our new communications systems for the diocese are being established, with our new website being [www.CopticOrthodox.London](http://www.CopticOrthodox.London). This is still a work in progress. Our Twitter account @CopticDiocese is also now active. We hope to establish a periodical diocesan newsletter shortly that will be potentially disseminated both online and in print form. We are also working towards establishing a database system that will facilitate greater communication across the diocese, as well as effective distribution of information.

I have been able to meet with, and hear from, each parish council independently, and a joint meeting of all our parish secretaries and treasurers will be held in March to enable them to be better acquainted with, as well as share experiences with and learn from, one another. We also now have a joint diocesan account for shared activities and are working on a unified constitution for our parishes, as well as an overarching constitution for the diocese.

With regards to our broader engagement, we are continuing to build on the ecumenical, interreligious and official relations that have been developing over the past decades, and will now have teams to ensure that we remain present and effective in the wider community that surrounds us. In order to maintain the breadth of this engagement, and parity at every level, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II has also formally conferred the ecclesial title of Archbishop of London, and this is why you will sometimes see my title as Archbishop.

A matter that requires your prayers is our search for a new Central London base that will act as a diocesan hub for our London-based ministries. We are in the process of actively searching, and hope to secure something by the end of this year, God willing.

As you see, it has been a busy and blessed three months. Above all, I am so incredibly thankful for the gracious acceptance, love and support I have felt and experienced from every one of you. To reiterate, this is *our* diocese, which can only work at its very best if we are all actively involved. In this spirit, please accept this as an open invitation for any suggestions you may have regarding any aspect of the ministry and life of our diocese.

Beside our diocesan motto "A city set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matthew 5:14), I have always been inspired by Nehemiah 2:20 in which we read "the God of Heaven Himself will prosper us, therefore we His servants will arise and build". Placing these two side by side, we are inspired to work together under God's guidance, knowing that if we do, His light can, and indeed will, shine in our Church, and through us into His world.

Finally, I ask you to keep me, each other, and our Diocese in your prayers during these blessed Lenten days, as I assure you that you are all in mine.

Your servant,

+Angaelos  
Archbishop of London