

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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BQ 766 – No. 23/2023

“I have lost a friend” – Bishop Schirmmacher says farewell to Bishop Michael El Baramousy

(Bonn, 18.09.2023) On August 5th, 2023, one of the two Coptic bishops in Germany, Bishop Michael El Baramousy, or “Anba Michael” as I affectionately called him as a friend, and as his congregations called him, passed away. One day after his death, he would have celebrated his 81st birthday.

I had the honour to preach at his episcopal consecration in Kröffelbach on June 30th, 2013 and to be the first to congratulate him. 12 Coptic bishops were present. Half a year later, I had the honour of welcoming the Coptic Pope on German soil in his church in Kröffelbach.

Bishop Michael was not only a significant mediator for the relations between the Coptic Church and all churches in Germany, including the Evangelical Alliance, but above all a model of Christian humility and modesty and radiated an incredible kindness. I have had this confirmed by many, church members, monks in his monastery and representatives of other churches.



Bishop Schirmmacher congratulates Bishop Michael El Baramousy during his episcopal ordination in Germany on June 30, 2013 © BQ/Schirmmacher

Born on August 6th, 1942 in Kalubeya (Egypt), Bishop Michael first worked in banking before studying theology and becoming a hermit in a monastery in Egypt. In 1980, he moved to Germany to minister to Coptic Christians in Germany. In 1990, he bought a guesthouse in Waldsolms-Kröffelbach, near my hometown of Giessen.

He was consecrated bishop much too late, as only the new Coptic Pope comprehensively appointed bishops worldwide in the diaspora who were locally inculturated (see BQ 263). He shared the care of the Coptic parishes in Germany with Bishop Anba

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Damian. He was responsible for the southern half of Germany (Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Rhineland-Palatinate, Hesse, half of North Rhine-Westphalia). The Butzbacher Zeitung reports on his work:

“In 2000, Michael built a house for priests, called Brothers, with 30 monastic cells. In November 2002, teaching began in Kröffelbach at the Institute for Coptic Orthodox Theology with over 30 men and women studying. In 2007, Michael bought the village’s former primary school, which he converted into a theological seminary. In June 2013, Michael was appointed Bishop for the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Southern Germany, making him pastor and contact person for Copts in Hesse, Rhineland-Palatinate, Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg and parts of North Rhine-Westphalia. For the growing Coptic population, Bishop Michael has founded nine parishes and bought three church buildings in Mainz, Bergneustadt and Wetzlar, where Coptic services have been celebrated since last year in the former Catholic St. Elisabeth Church. In 2011, a guest house with 40 rooms was built on the monastery grounds. Currently, 15 priests and two novices live in Kröffelbach.” (Butzbacher Zeitung)



Bishop Schirmacher welcomes the Coptic Pope to Germany on December 19, 2013 © BQ/Schirmacher

Excerpt from the 2013 news report on the episcopal consecration of Bishop Michael (BQ 263)

“Schirmacher also warned the Copts living in Europe not to throw away their faith in redemption in Jesus. ‘It would be a tragedy if families who have maintained their Christian faith during many generations of persecution would throw their faith overboard as soon as they experience freedom in the West.’

Bishop Michael thanked Schirmacher for his moving words. ‘He spoke to us as Coptic bishops from the depths of his heart. The belief in salvation in Jesus Christ is intended for all people, and we want to be a witness to the people in Europe who no longer believe.’

As Schirmacher explained to the media, this installation of a new bishop is part of a very constructive program of the new Coptic Pope, Tawadros II, who was installed in November 2012, that recently was introduced to a gathering of European Coptic bishops and priests in Vienna. The plan is to develop more dioceses, each with its own

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bishop, because many dioceses are too large. All the parts of the Coptic Church in Europe, which previously were led directly by the Coptic Pope in Cairo, should receive their own leadership, so that the national and regional church leadership is closer to the local churches. Schirmmacher thinks this step could lead Coptic Christians to become a global Christian fellowship.

Previously Schirmmacher received extensive reports about the situation in Egypt from five bishops from Egypt.

The invitation to the installation was received via the Internationale Gesellschaft für Menschenrechte, (International Society for Human Rights, IGFM) of which Schirmmacher is a board member. The IGFM has long been involved in protecting human rights in Egypt and has many Coptic Christians as members. Dozens of Coptic IGFM members from across Germany took part in the bishop's installation.

The property for the Kröffelbach cloister was purchased in 1980. The new church was dedicated in 1990 and was the first Coptic Church in Germany designed and built entirely in the ancient Coptic style. The Institute for Coptic-Orthodox Theology, established in 2002, now has 50 men and women studying toward a four-year degree. Priest Abuna Michael El Baramousy, now Bishop Michael, helped with the development of their theological institute and with the building of the church. He has supported active ecumenical relations for decades.”

Downloads and Links:

- **Photo 1** and **photo 2**: Bishop Schirmmacher welcomes the Coptic Pope to Germany on December 19, 2013 © BQ/Schirmmacher
- **Photo 3**: Bishop Schirmmacher congratulates Bishop Michael El Baramousy during his episcopal ordination in Germany on June 30, 2013 © BQ/Schirmmacher
- Report on the death of Bishop Michael El Baramousy in the Butzbacher Zeitung: <https://butzbacher-zeitung.de/koptischer-bischof-michael-ist-tot/>
- Data on Michael Samy Salama El Baramoussy on orthodoxia.ch: <https://orthodoxia.ch/en/name/339/show>
- Bonn Profiles 263 – No. 28/2013 'WEA Ambassador for Human Rights issues appeal on behalf of persecuted Coptic Christians at the installation of a new Coptic bishop in Europe': https://www.bucer.de/fileadmin/_migrated/tx_org/BQ0263_eng.pdf

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