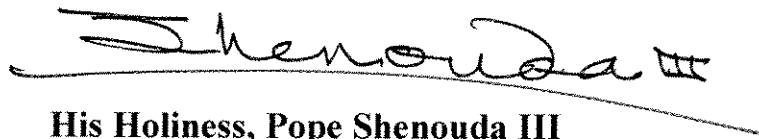


Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and the See of St Mark

PROCLAMATION

It is **HEREBY PROCLAIMED** that the constitution comprising the following 8 signed pages is the Constitution of the **COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ALEXANDRIA AND THE SEE OF ST MARK IN THE DIOCESE OF MELBOURNE AND OTHER REGIONS** and is to have effect from the nineteenth day of June 2006.

Dated the *Twelfth* day of *June* 2006.

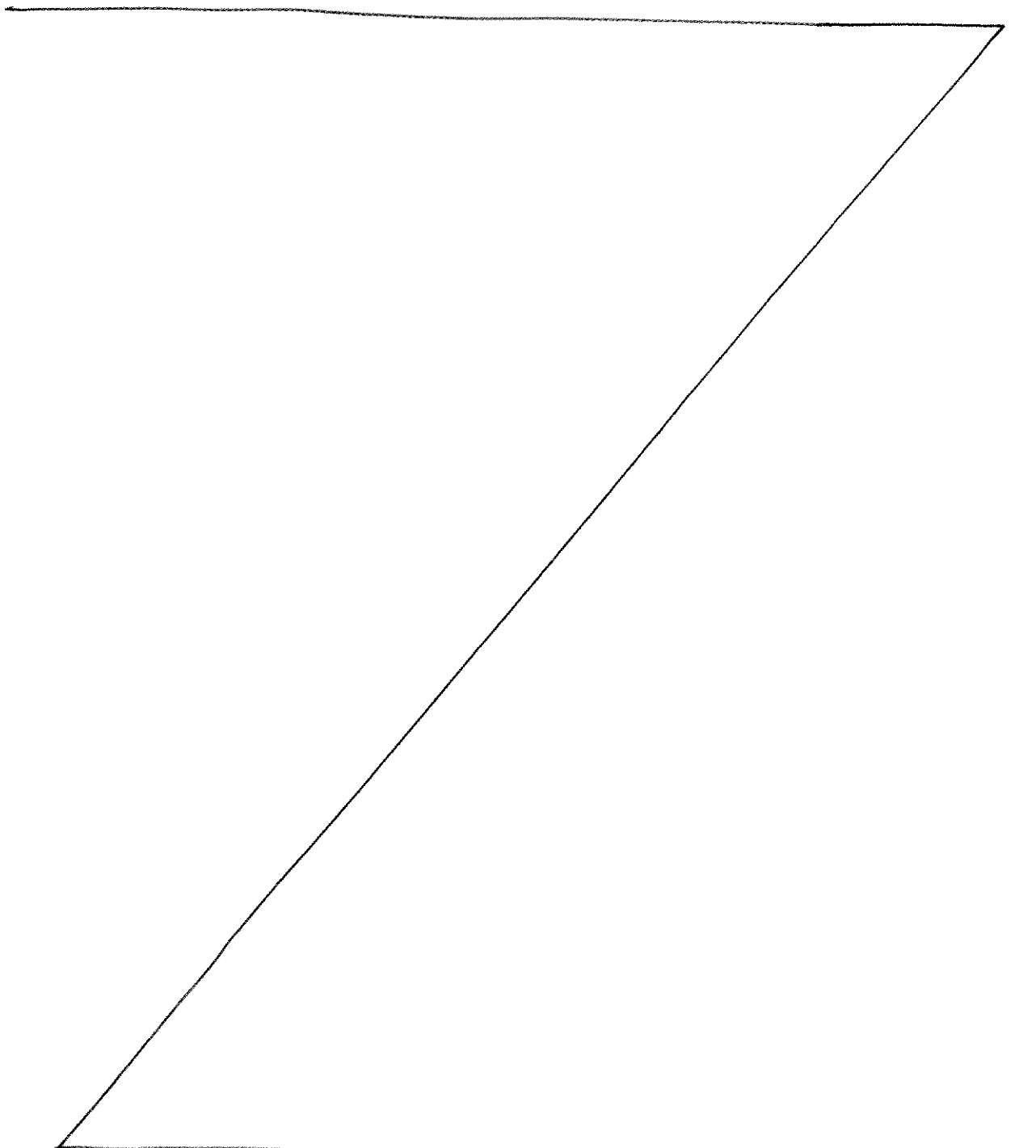
A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Shenouda III", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and includes the Roman numeral "III" at the end.

His Holiness, Pope Shenouda III

Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark

Constitution

**Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and the See of St Mark
in the Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions**




Shenouda III

*His Holiness, Pope Shenouda III
Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of St. Mark*

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*His Holiness, Pope Shenouda III
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Constitution

Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and the See of St Mark in the Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions

1. Introduction and General Principles

(The following principle is indisputable and cannot be varied)

- 1.1 The Coptic Orthodox Church is a Church founded by St Mark the Evangelist and Apostle, in the city of Alexandria, Egypt, in the first century (**Church**). Accordingly, the Church is an Apostolic church proclaiming the solemn belief that the head of the Church is the successor of St Mark the Apostle and as such is entrusted by God and the Church to oversee it and to preside over its Holy Synod, which is the highest priestly, legislative and executive authority in the Church. Accordingly, the Church is a hierarchical Church.

(The following principle is indisputable and cannot be varied)

- 1.2 The head of the Church is His Holiness, Pope Shenouda III, the Pope of Alexandria and the Patriarch of the See of St Mark (**His Holiness**). The authority of His Holiness and the Holy Synod of the Church extends to the entire See of St Mark, both inside and outside Egypt.

(The following principle is indisputable and cannot be varied)

- 1.3 A Constitution of the Church was promulgated by the Holy Synod of the Church on the second day of June 1985, a copy of which, for the purposes of this Constitution, was certified and notarised in the presence of Peter Zablud, Public Notary, at Melbourne in the State of Victoria on the nineteenth day of June 2006 (**Universal Constitution**). *The Universal Constitution can be amended in accordance with its Articles nos 69 and 70.*
- 1.4 By the authority contained in the Universal Constitution and in participation with the Holy Synod, His Holiness, on fourteenth day of November 1999, established the Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions following the recommendation, consent and acclamation of its faithful, by the solemn Episcopal appointment and liturgical calling of His Grace, Bishop Suriel as its bishop.
- 1.5 The Diocese of Melbourne and Affiliated Regions geographically encompasses the States of Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania in the Commonwealth of Australia, the Sovereign State of New Zealand, the Republic of the Fiji Islands, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru, the Independent State of Samoa, the Republic of Vanuatu, the Sovereign States of Tuvalu, Kingdom of Tonga and Solomon Islands and such other States that may be determined by a decree of His Holiness (**Diocese**).
- 1.6 To provide for the proper governance and leadership of the Diocese, it has been determined that a Constitution is to be promulgated to give witness to the inherent authority vested in its Bishop, so that the hierarchical structure of the Church may be visible, so that the exercise of its functions are properly ordered and the rights and obligations of its members are defined and safeguarded.

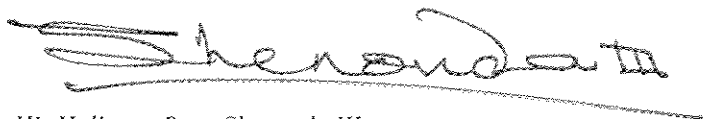


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- 1.7 Therefore, and in consultation with His Grace, Bishop Suriel, and by virtue of the supreme authority that is vested in him, His Holiness promulgated this written Constitution as the Constitution of the Diocese, ordering that from the date of its promulgation it is to have the force of law for the whole of the Diocese.
- 1.8 This Constitution:-
- (a) shall only have effect on the Church within the Diocese;
 - (b) shall not have effect where it is inconsistent with the Universal Constitution, or any proclamations or determinations of the Holy Synod, each of which shall have full force and effect unless and until revoked;
 - (c) does not abrogate nor does it derogate from prior agreements entered into by or on behalf of the Church with Governments or other civil entities; and
 - (d) does not nor does it intend to determine rites or observances that may relate to liturgical actions in the Church, which are determined in accordance with the laws and traditions of the Church and governed by its Holy Synod.

2. The Bishop of the Diocese

- 2.1 The Bishop of the Diocese is the Bishop of the Church for the time being who has been consecrated to be responsible for the Diocese in accordance with the Universal Constitution (**Bishop**).
- 2.2 The Bishop has all the powers required of the office of a Bishop of a diocese in the Church as are provided in the laws and traditions of the Church, including those expressed in the Universal Constitution.
- 2.3 The Bishop is the responsible head of the Diocese. The priests and deacons of the Church cannot perform any act without his advice and approval, and they are bound by his spiritual and administrative advice and are accountable to him.
- 2.4 The Bishop has sole and exclusive authority for the formation and oversight of all the individual parishes in the Diocese and all activities that may at any time be conducted under the auspices of the Church. He shall have command and power over the spiritual, financial and administrative matters in his Diocese including over all of its property and other goods.
- 2.5 The Bishop is in charge of the ordination of the priests and deacons in his Diocese, consecrating churches, altars, baptisteries, icons and all the vessels of the altar and is responsible for the religious services in his Diocese. He shepherds his people as he receives the shepherd's staff from His Holiness. He shares with His Holiness in his apostolic services and in ordaining new Bishops, as he is also a member in the Holy Synod.
- 2.6 The Bishop may appoint a vicar or deputy to act on those matters that he may nominate in writing during his absence from the See.



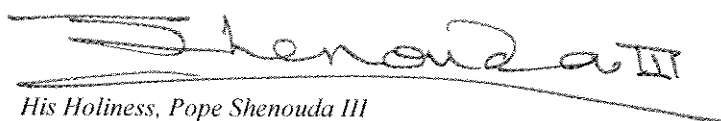
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3. The Clerical Council

- 3.1 There shall be a Clerical Council of the Diocese which shall be presided over by the Bishop, and composed of four priests of the Diocese appointed by the Bishop on terms he may determine whenever necessary.
- 3.2 The Clerical Council is the ecclesiastical court of the Diocese and shall have power to investigate and ratify ecclesiastical matters concerning the priests, deacons and any other members of the Church in the Diocese in accordance with the laws and traditions of the Church. The Clerical Council shall also have power and jurisdiction in all matters relating to the sacrament of matrimony and decisions concerning marriage in the Church.
- 3.3 The Clerical Council also has power to act as the appeal board of the Diocese in all matters provided for in the laws and traditions of the Church. A member of the Church in the Diocese can appeal to the Clerical Council by written application setting out the details of the matter in relation to which an appeal is sought.
- 3.4 The higher appeal board of the Church is the General Clerical Council which meets in Egypt and is presided over by His Holiness. The Holy Synod is the highest appeal authority in the Church.

4. The General Board and the Goods of the Church

- 4.1 There shall be a General Board of the Diocese which shall be an advisory body convened by the Bishop, to assist the Bishop in determining the administrative, financial and other like needs of the Parishes and all other activities in the Diocese that are conducted under the auspices of the Church.
- 4.2 The Bishop presides over the General Board of the Diocese. The members of the General Board are the presidents, the secretaries, the treasurers of the Board of Deacons of each Parish, and such other persons who may from time to time be appointed by the Bishop to represent the various schools, hostels and other activities conducted by the Church within the Diocese.
- 4.3 The General Board shall meet 6 times a year, once in every second calendar month, on days which are to be set by the Bishop at the beginning of each year. The Bishop may in his discretion determine the agenda and the conduct of proceedings at each meeting of the General Board. The Bishop shall appoint a secretary to the General Board who is to keep the Board's library.
- 4.4 The General Board at the direction of the Bishop may establish advisory boards subordinate to the General Board to assist in the determination of the administrative, financial and other like needs of parishes in regions of the Diocese that are outside the State of Victoria.
- 4.5 All those in the Diocese who are responsible for the management, maintenance and use of the goods of the Church must, subject to the directions of the Bishop, take all necessary steps to ensure that the goods of the Church are used for their rightful purpose and are protected at civil law.



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- 4.6 The Bishop may from time to time appoint trustees in which the goods of the Church in the Diocese may be vested to be held on trust for the Church and over which he must preside (**Trustees**). Without derogating from the rights and responsibilities that he may have, the Bishop may appoint Trustees on such terms and conditions and with such powers (including all of the powers vested in him under this Constitution or by the laws and traditions of the Church but excluding a power of delegation) as he may see fit, provided however that no decisions concerning trust property of the Diocese are to be taken or executed by the Trustees without his consent in writing. The Trustees will hold the goods of the Church in the Diocese for the purposes of the Church.
- 4.7 When it is reported to a meeting of the General Board of the Diocese that the financial needs of the Diocese will occasion the borrowing of an amount in excess of the sum that is permitted under this Constitution and of which more than one half of the membership of the General Board becomes aggrieved, they may, in accordance with the laws and traditions of the Church, by a petition in writing to be dispatched within 2 calendar months from the day of the report, seek the counsel of His Holiness in respect thereof.
- 4.8 The Bishop may raise borrowings as are required for the needs of the Diocese provided however that any borrowing in excess of the sum of \$180,000 at any one time (increased by an amount equal to 5% in every calendar year subsequent to the date of proclamation of this Constitution) may not be raised without the prior written consent of His Holiness.
- 4.9 The Bishop, or upon his written direction the Trustees appointed by him, shall have the right to sell or mortgage any of the goods of the Church in the Diocese but only with the prior written consent of His Holiness.
- 4.10 Only the Bishop shall be entitled to authorise the purchase of real estate for the Diocese or any of the Parishes of the Diocese or other activities conducted under the auspices of the Church in the Diocese.
- 4.11 The Bishop, on behalf of the Diocese, shall have the power to guarantee and indemnify, or assume any obligation for the payment of money or the performance of an agreement, contractual obligation or undertaking by the Diocese and to secure the liability arising from any such guarantee, indemnity or obligation by charging or mortgaging any part of the property and goods owned by or held on behalf of the Diocese.

5. Parishes of the Church

- 5.1 A parish in the Diocese is a distinct community of the faithful of the Church which has been established by the Bishop in accordance with the customs, traditions and legislation of the Church (**Parish**). Each Parish is integral to, and indivisible with, the Church. The Bishop alone has the power to establish a Parish. A Bishop can also suppress a Parish.
- 5.2 The Bishop shall appoint or ordain priests to serve the Parishes in his Diocese or to carry on activities of the Church in the Diocese as he may require, from among the qualified persons in the Diocese, or elsewhere in the Church, terms he may determine.
- 5.3 If the priest is unaccepted by the Parish, the Bishop, together with the Clerical Council of the Diocese, will determine the matter.



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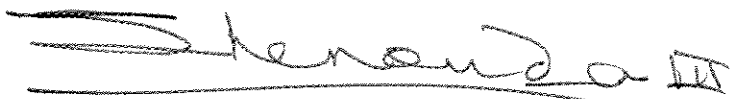
6. Objects of a Parish

6.1 A Parish shall:

- (a) promote a Coptic Orthodox christian way of life according to the faith and doctrines of the Church through:
 - (i) administering the liturgy and the sacraments;
 - (ii) the pastoral work of the clergy;
 - (iii) christian education, publication and Sunday Schools;
 - (iv) spiritual meetings and Bible study;
 - (v) group activities, such as christian cultural clubs, sports, religious plays, social gatherings, trips and similar activities;
 - (vi) running ethnic classes; and
 - (vii) social services to members of the Church and others everywhere;
- (b) co-operate and assist other Parishes;
- (c) carry on evangelistic and missionary work;
- (d) promote christian unity all over the world guided by the work of the Holy Synod; and
- (e) support by all possible means the Church in Egypt.

7. The Board of Deacons

- 7.1 In this section 7, a reference to the laws and traditions of the Church shall mean the laws and traditions of the Church as they are interpreted and to be applied in a Parish by direction of the Bishop.
- 7.2 There shall be a Board of Deacons in each Parish to assist the priest(s) with the financial and administrative matters of the Parish. The Board of Deacons shall fulfil such responsibilities as are provided for in the laws and traditions of the Church.
- 7.3 A Board shall be comprised of the priest(s) of the Parish, and those of the duly ordained deacons in the Parish who are elected in accordance with the laws and traditions of the Church. The Board of Deacons shall be presided over by the most senior priest of the Parish, unless the Bishop is present in which case the Bishop shall preside. The Bishop may appoint the priests(s) to the membership and/or presidium of a Board of Deacons or refrain from that.
- 7.4 The structure and proceedings of a Board of Deacons in the Diocese shall be in accordance with the laws and traditions of the Church



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8. Seal

- 8.1 The Common Seal of the Diocese shall be kept by the Bishop or his delegate. There must only be one common seal for the Diocese.
- 8.2 The affixing of the common seal must be attested by the signature of the Bishop or such other person duly appointed and authorised pursuant to clause 2.6.

9. Name

No association within the Diocese can call itself 'Coptic Orthodox', or purport to be affiliated in any way with the Church, without the prior written consent of the Bishop.

10. Alteration of Constitution

This Constitution may only be amended in writing by His Holiness save for the principles contained in clauses 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 which may not be amended.



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