

## **Bishop Anba Suriel PhD**

From Port Said, Egypt, to Sydney, Australia, to Honolulu, Hawaii, and many locations in between, Bishop Anba Suriel has led a life devoted to Christian values. A strong and influential leader, Bishop Suriel's involvement in the education of Christian Orthodox communities reflects his deep and heartfelt commitment to the Church and to the importance of theological education.

Migrating from Egypt to Australia with his family at the age of four, Bishop Suriel showed an early interest in the Church and in sharing its values and lessons. He began teaching in Sunday School at the age of 17, and teaching continued to be an integral part of his life. After studying mathematics at the University of Sydney, Bishop Suriel taught high school students in Sydney's west.

When the opportunity arose to travel with other selected youth from Sydney and Melbourne on the inaugural Coptic youth tour to the Holy Land of Egypt, Bishop Suriel eagerly jumped at the chance. The trip's impact on him was monumental, leading to an opportunity to become a youth leader himself. The seeds of Bishop Suriel's passion for education and making a difference in young people's lives continued to be sown.

Before being enthroned in his Diocese in Melbourne in 1999, where he continues to serve today, Bishop Suriel accepted new challenges near and far. Consecrated as a monk, he lived and served in the Monastery of Saint Bishoy, a desert monastery in Egypt, for five years. Ordained as a priest in 1993, he then travelled to Honolulu, Hawaii, to pastor to the small Coptic community there, an assignment that he fulfilled diligently and passionately.

In 1997, Bishop Suriel was ordained as a General Bishop in the Coptic Orthodox Church. His worldwide travels then continued with an assignment in New Jersey in the United States.

During his two years on the East Coast of America, Bishop Suriel continued to leverage his experience working with youth in order to reach out to and engage young people in the Church's mission.

Demonstrating his unique penchant for uniting people from opposite sides of the globe, Bishop Suriel helped lay the foundations for BLESS USA, the Bishopric of Ecumenical and Social Services, an organisation that raises funds and develops methods of helping the poor and needy Christians of Egypt.

Bishop Suriel returned to Melbourne in 1999 to serve in his current position, which includes serving as Bishop of Melbourne, Canberra, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific.

While his illustrious career has taken him around the world, Bishop Suriel's commitment to education has remained close to his heart throughout his journeys. In September 2000, he established Saint Athanasius Coptic Orthodox theological college, which became the world's first Coptic accredited theological college through the University of Divinity. Also serving as co-editor of a publication through Saint Vladimir's Seminary Press, Bishop Suriel plays an ongoing and active role in advancing theological education.

Dedicated to sharing the Coptic faith and contributing to open dialogue and conversations, Bishop Suriel initiated a new campus, which will open in the heart of Melbourne, to serve as a theological college and a function centre. "I hope this will be a real hub of education", Bishop Suriel says, reflecting his ongoing commitment to growing the Church in Australia.

Whether serving in a desert monastery, an island church or the cosmopolitan heart of a city, Bishop Suriel's devotion to fostering community and promoting education shows his unwavering and admirable commitment to serving the common good, which we commend him for today.