

# KOINONIA

The Newsletter of SAC

Issue 8, December 2020



ST ATHANASIUS  
COLLEGE



UNIVERSITY  
of DIVINITY

A Tribute to SAC's first  
registrar Fr Macarius Wahba

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020

Congratulations to SAC  
Graduates 2020

SAC's Free Short Online  
Courses

VCE STUDENTS TAKE ON  
CERT. III IN CHRISTIAN  
MINISTRY & THEOLOGY





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Issue 8, December 2020  
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# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

*"...but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.'" (2 Corinthians 12:9)*

Our teacher Paul, who by imitating Christ, saw that it was important to boast of weakness – a unique practice that is rarely observed today.

He saw the humiliation of Christ before the government and his shaming by the world around Him as a vision of Christ glorified. It was what seemed to be the weakness of Christ, that was in fact his power; His body that was offered for the salvation of the world.

This is why we praise the suffering and crucified Christ during the Holy Pascha week saying the doxology, *"Yours is the power, glory, blessing, and majesty forever."* Our world is not exempt from suffering, and this is evident in the past year where we were plagued by the 2020 Covid-19 global pandemic.

Churches were closed leaving parishioners confined in their homes. Teaching institutions were prevented from face-to-face learning. Businesses were closed and put in positions of debt. But despite what seemed to be a weakness and a test of faith and of hope, it was love that endured. Love for the ministry saw parishes live streaming their liturgical services, youth meetings, and Bible studies.

Love for education saw the universities transition all their subjects to an online mode of learning, even the hands-on subjects! Love for charity challenged businesses to offer their services in new and innovative ways. At St Athanasius College, it was in this weakness where the power of Christ was consistently being perfected through the ministry of the staff, teachers, and students toward theological education.

We witnessed staff work tirelessly and collaboratively to shift our learning environment to an online mode including ancient languages and iconography. Teachers stayed in regular contact with students to facilitate their learning and encourage a continued sense of discipleship. Students were active in their own parishes by organising and sharing in communal prayers.

New initiatives were launched this year which include the free online short courses, the introduction of two new fields of study that are philosophy and missiology, and the development of a freshly designed SAC website that makes accessibility more user friendly.

For this reason, we are proud of our achievements this year. We boast in our weakness because the glory and power of Christ has manifested itself in the ministry of His people.

As a College community, we thank Christ that we were able to continue offering an essential service to the spiritual and intellectual growth of each individual in their Christian journey. 2021 will present its own challenges, but, in the words of the Apostle Paul, *"[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."* (1 Corinthians 13:7)

We look forward to seeing all our students again in 2021!

**Fr Dr Daniel Ghabrial,  
Principal**



# A Tribute to SAC's First Registrar Fr Macarius Wahba

The foundations for SAC were built upon the pioneering educational work of the late Louis Wahba (father of Fr Macarius Wahba) where he served as lecturer, registrar, and treasurer.

SAC named a lecture theatre after Louis Wahba, which opened on 24 October 2009, to honour his tireless dedication to theological education.

The late Fr Macarius carried the legacy of his father and served as the College's registrar as well as serving on the governance committee that managed College affairs. He was profoundly interested in the works of Pope Shenouda III and spent much of his early years of ministry translating sermons, books, and reflections.

Principal Fr Daniel Ghabrial said, "Fr Macarius spent much of his time researching the ritual order of feast days and other liturgical services and would prepare small booklets to share and assist the other priests during those services. We were heavily reliant on those booklets. I hope we can continue doing this work."

Much of the translated work of Fr Macarius was used by students in their studies and are today kept in the College library as well as the library at St Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church.



*Fr Macarius Wahba*



*Fr Macarius as College Registrar, during the Monasticism Symposium in 2007.*

Many of the students still remember the ministry Fr Macarius dedicated to the College through his mentorship to them by encouraging a fervour to excel in their studies, as well as his perseverance to the development of the priestly ministry.

Lecturer Fr Gregorios Awad recalls, "We would offer two lectures weekly that were intended to support priests in the ministerial development. And it was Fr Macarius who organised these lectures because he believed that it was important all priests should regularly gather together and learn from each other's spiritual ministries."

Even though many students came to him to learn, he always considered himself a student among other students. It was Fr Macarius' humility and zeal for the spiritual growth of the community that motivated his commitment toward his ministry.

His legacy at SAC is now continued by some of his spiritual children within the SAC community.

May the memory and ministry of Fr Macarius be eternal in the lives of everyone who encounters St Athanasius College.



## CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR SAC GRADUATES IN 2020!

The ceremony of conferring academic awards is a tradition that takes place at academic institutions throughout the world. But in light of the coronavirus pandemic and the need to take all possible steps to protect the health and safety of the University's members and the community at large, the usual University of Divinity public graduation ceremonies performed in March and December were cancelled in 2020 and instead we gathered as a community to celebrate the academic achievements of our 17 graduates in an online, virtual graduation ceremony.

Graduating with a Graduate Certificate in Divinity:

Sarah Morgan

Merna Wissa

Graduating with a Diploma in Theology:

Fr Mousa El-Baramousy

Mariam Gabra

Giovanni Granata

Diana Goubrial

Stephanie Habib

Fady Issak

Sara Issak

Barakat Kelid

Michael Morcos

Paul Morcous

Sami Sawires

Anthony Tadros

Graduating with an Advanced Diploma in Theology and Ministry

Fr Raphael Antony

Emmanuel Carrington

Graduating with a Master of Theological Studies:

Ashraf Hanna

On behalf of all the SAC community, we warmly congratulate our graduates!

The live streamed online graduation ceremonies can be viewed here:

[27 March 2020 ceremony](#)

[4 Dec 2020 ceremony](#)

# INTRODUCING OUR NEW ACADEMIC DEAN: PROF. JOHN McDOWELL

John knew that academic theology would be the path he would follow when he was introduced as a teenager to the writings of Irenaeus and Athanasius. A Bachelor of Divinity Honours degree at the University of Aberdeen was followed by a doctorate at the University of Cambridge.



*John with his family*

Under the supervision of Prof. Nicholas Lash, his PhD was completed and then soon published as *Hope in Barth's Eschatology* (Ashgate, 2000). Moving to the University of Edinburgh in 2000, John spent almost nine years as the Meldrum Lecturer in Systematic Theology, and for the last two and a half years there he was the School's Director of Undergraduate Studies. In 2009, John took up the Morpeth Chair in Theology and Religion at the University of Newcastle, NSW, moving later to the University of Divinity as the Director of Research and a Professor accredited to teach at all levels in Philosophy, Systematic Theology, and Moral Theology.



*John's football team*



He is a prolific researcher, having published over 70 journal articles and book chapters, 7 monographs, and 8 edited collections in matters of doctrine, political theology, studies in popular culture, and ethics. Among his publications are, *Theology and the Globalized Present: Feasting in the Presence of God* (Fortress Press, 2019); the edited collection 'Hope in Dark Times', Religions special issue (2019-20),

[https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special\\_issues/times](https://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions/special_issues/times); and, with Scott Kirkland, *Eschatology: Christian Hope* (Eerdmans, 2018).

As father of 5 children, and active member of his church community, there is not much spare time. Yet John coaches and plays for a local football team, with his own fan commitment being to Liverpool FC. He also consumes as much high quality science-fiction and dystopian television series and movies as he can!

# INTRODUCING OUR FIRST LECTURER IN MISSIOLOGY: FR DR JACOB JOSEPH



Fr. Dr. Jacob Joseph joined SAC as a lecturer in 2020, bringing a wealth of secular and theological academic experience from India. Active in research contributions and course development, he lectures Orthodox Mission Contextual Theology and History, Syriac Theology, and Indian Theology.

In 2020, he received his Ph.D. from the University of Divinity, Melbourne, for a thesis titled “The Christ Who Embraces: An Orthodox Theology of Margins in India.” His research



*Fr Jacob celebrating liturgy*

interest focuses on Patristic, Liturgical, Missional, and Contextual Theology. Fr. Jacob is a priest of the Syrian Orthodox Church in India. With his particular interest in mission among social margins, youth and children, he served as a priest within and outside India for twenty years.

Currently, he is the Vicar of St. Thomas Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church, Craigieburn, Melbourne, the National Youth Director, and the Sunday School Curriculum Chairperson of the Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church in Australia.

His hobbies include traveling, writing lyrics and composing music, singing, conducting the church choir, and organising activities for the youth and children. He lives in Melbourne with his wife, Deepa Jacob, and two children – Hansel Jacob and Georgy Jacob.



*Fr Jacob with his family*

# INTRODUCING OUR TUTOR: SHADY NESSIM



*In the manuscript library at St. Paul's Monastery*

Shady has a Master of Theological Studies from the University of Divinity and for the past two years has served as the student representative on the University's Academic Board.

A High School teacher in Humanities, English and Religion at St Francis Xavier College, Officer, Shady is also passionate about Coptic Studies and accordingly has published an article in the peer reviewed journal *Bulletin De La*



*Société d'Archéologie Copte* (2019): "If Someone Contemplates You, O Holy Virgin And Mother Of God.' A Patristic Evaluation Of The Coptic Theotokia: Monday And Tuesday Theotokia"; and a co-authored chapter with Dr Lisa Agaiby in *Copts in Modernity* (Brill, 2021): "Cenotaph of Paul the Hermit".

He is also one of the lead team members on The pioneering project to digitize the collection of manuscripts at the Coptic Monastery of St. Paul the Hermit at the Red Sea, that is directed by Dr Lisa Agaiby.

He is an accredited associate lecturer of the University in liturgical studies and ancient languages. His hobbies include swimming, reading and DIY creations. In November 2020 he married Rebecca who is also a SAC graduate and high school teacher.

*Crowning ceremony of Shady and Rebecca*





# Priesthood Ordination of Rev. Fr Jonathan Awad

Our congratulations to SAC alumni Rev. Fr Jonathan Awad on his ordination to the priesthood. Ordained by the Coptic Orthodox patriarch, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, the ceremony took place on Monday 27 February 2020 at the Coptic Monastery of St Bishoy in Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt.

Fr Jonathan graduated with an Graduate Diploma in Theology in 2018. He is now serving as a parish priest at St Bishoy and St Shenouda's Coptic Church in Bulleen, Melbourne.

*"For the office of the priesthood is executed upon earth, yet it ranks amongst things that are heavenly..."*  
(St John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*)



# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020



2020 VET students, with Frs Michael, Isaac, and Shenouda

## YEARS 11 & 12 STUDENTS TAKE ON THE CERTIFICATE III IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY & THEOLOGY

By Fr Michael Salib

In 2020, St Athanasius College welcomed for the first time 25 students of Years 11 and 12 undertaking the **Certificate III in Christian Ministry and Theology**. The program allowed students the opportunity to invest in their spiritual development whilst working towards their academic studies, with the certificate counting towards the ATAR score of the VCE students.

This program was offered in partnership with VETA youth who provided the framework which was then delivered by SAC in the theology and tradition of the Coptic Orthodox faith. As part of the program, students regularly met together in peer groups at SAC's city campus and online during the COVID-19 restrictions, attended retreats, participated in their local parish community, consistently engaged in biblical reflection, had structured mentoring, and undertook practical ministry placements.

Throughout the year students adjusted to the changing COVID-19 restrictions by completing

some of the aspects of the program online and in small groups face to face.

They were led by SAC faculty Fr Shenouda Botros and Fr Michael Salib, and SAC alumni Fr Isaac Wissa.

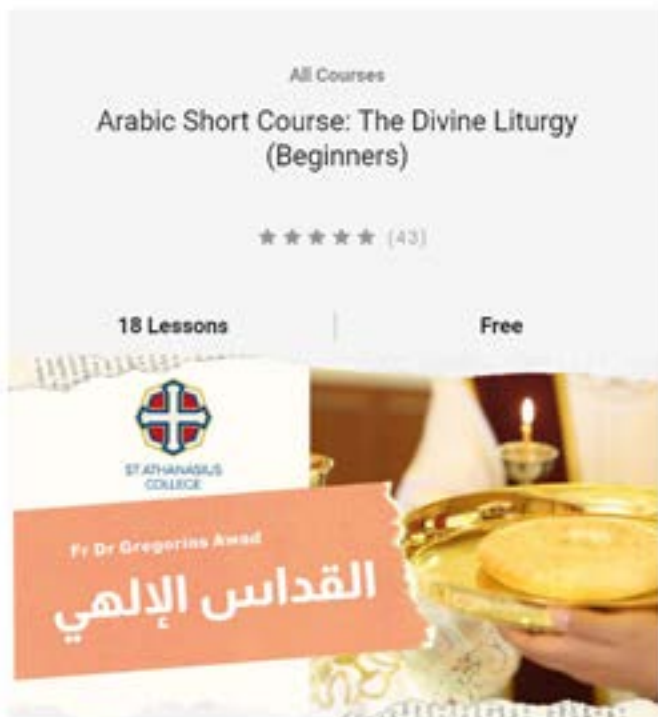
In 2021 SAC will welcome 35 students from 13 schools across Melbourne who will be undertaking the program, with SAC faculty Abram Mikhail and SAC Alumni Youstina Nan joining as additional Peer Group Leaders. This program allows senior high school students the valuable opportunity to engage with the faith, tradition, and practices of the Coptic Orthodox Church, while allowing them to put their faith into practice through various ministry placements.

We look forward to seeing students who have completed the program enrolling in the various undergraduate degrees available at SAC.



Meetings and lectures took place at SAC's city campus

## SAC OFFERS FREE SHORT ONLINE COURSES



During the pandemic when many were in lockdown, SAC introduced a number of free non-accredited flexible and self-paced online short courses as a means of offering a service to the local and international community.

The first courses introduced were on **The Divine Liturgy** by Fr. Dr. Gregorios Awad, and **Sketching a Coptic Icon** by Mr. Ashraf Gerges.

These courses have been effective in raising awareness of the significance of theological education, and to date there have been over 2500 enrolments in these two courses alone!

A number of additional short courses will also be rolled out in 2021 on Christian Family, Youth Ministry, Liturgy, Philosophy, Old Testament, and Theology and Film.



## ONLINE PUBLIC LECTURES

During the 2020 Coronavirus global pandemic, places of communal worship were forced to close by law and the faithful struggled to gather in the Church and partake of the communion. The faithful began to ask questions regarding the role of the Eucharist in this global crisis.

Can the Eucharist heal those with the virus? In an online public lecture on 5 April 2020 titled “Holy Sacraments and Healing”, Fr Dr Gregorios Awad discussed the purpose of the Eucharist in relation to both spiritual and physical healing by drawing upon the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite (d. 1st century AD) and the words of the Divine Liturgy to offer a theological response to the problem of sickness and healing both of body and soul.



Also during the pandemic, the DHHS (Department of Human and Health Services) identified a significant increase in cases of domestic violence due to COVID-19 lockdowns



which had families confined in their homes. Accordingly, commencing 9 April 2020, SAC faculty Dr Samir Ibrahim, Fr Abanoub Attalla, Fr Daniel Ghabrial, together with a panel of specialists consisting of Enas Ghabrial, Inas Ramzy, and Fr Elijah Fanous offered a three-part series that focused on family issues.

Episode 1 was on “Domestic Violence, Isolation and COVID-19” that offered advice on how to detect early signs of domestic violence and offered practical tips on how each member of the family is instrumental in overcoming the in-home struggles that present itself during the lockdown. Episode 2 was on “Bettering Family Life” where a panel of experts reflected over the foundational aspects of a Christian family and how to develop healthy practices centred around communication and compromise. And the final episode was on “Dealing with Children” where the panel discussed how to develop a trusting, growing, and positive relationship between parent and child.

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

Because of COVID-19 and travel restrictions, many academic conferences were cancelled in 2020, but those that did proceed went online.

On August 28-29, 17 scholars mostly from North America came together via zoom to present their latest research at the 21st International UCLA/St Shenouda Society Los Angeles Coptic Studies Conference.

Dr Lisa Agaiby, the only representative from Australia, was invited to present a paper on the background and objectives of SAC's flagship project: **The Manuscript Project at the Monastery of St Paul the Hermit at the Red Sea.**

Then on 15-16 October, the 14th International Conference of Iconographic Studies, Rijeka, Croatia also took place via zoom. The conference explored a diverse presentation of holiness in the Christian tradition, from Late Antiquity to modern times,



focusing mostly on art, hagiographical texts, and relics from the Middle Ages.

The Conference gathered scholars mostly from Europe and North America, and Dr Nebojsa Tumara, the only representative from Australia, presented a paper on the iconographic representation of “**The 21 Martyrs of Libya - Presenting Holiness in Contemporary Coptic Church**”. Proceedings of the conference forthcoming in *IKON. Journal of Iconographic Studies* (Brepols) in 2021.



Manuscript library at St Paul's Monastery

# MANUSCRIPT PROJECT AT THE MONASTERY OF ST PAUL THE HERMIT – AN UPDATE



Aba Soleman holding up one of the collection's largest manuscripts: an 18th century liturgical text

St Paul the Hermit (c. 228-341) has been identified throughout the centuries as the first Christian hermit, and is considered by some of the early Church Fathers, such as Jerome and John Cassian as being a co-founder of anchoritic monasticism, together with St Antony the Great (251-356). His hermitage – situated in the Eastern desert near the Red Sea in Egypt, and where St Paul is believed to have lived most of his long life – became the core of a monastic settlement that has existed continuously for the past 1,600 years. This monastic settlement, known today as the Monastery of St Paul the Hermit, bears material witness to sustained devotion to the saint in the form of multiple phases of expansion, wall paintings, liturgical items, and a vast collection of (unpublished) Coptic and Arabic manuscripts that date from as early as the 10th century.

St Paul's Monastery possesses around 1,200 extant manuscripts, making the collection one the largest in Christian Egypt! Since January 2018, St Athanasius College, under the direction of Dr Lisa Agaiby, has been leading a flagship project to digitise, catalogue, and restore the precious manuscripts in the Monastery's collection in order to first and foremost eliminate the real threat of these invaluable sources being further damaged, and thus preserve them for posterity. Since January 2018, five field trips have taken place, with the last trip being in January 2020 (project team

in January consisted of Dr Lisa Agaiby, Shady Nessim, and Abanoub Soleman). The team has made tremendous progress, digitising around 500 manuscripts to date and documenting a wealth of precious information. In addition, the project has resulted in 4 publications by Lisa Agaiby; one of which is co-authored with Shady Nessim:

Agaiby, "A Codicological Overview of Manuscript St Paul Monastery History 53" in *Bulletin de la Société d'archéologie copte* (Cairo: Société d'archéologie copte, 2018), 13-31;

Agaiby, "Scribal Practices in the Red Sea Monasteries" in *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 2021);

Agaiby & Nessim, "Cenotaph of Paul the Hermit at the Monastery of St Paul at the Red Sea" in *Proceedings of St Athanasius College's 5th International Symposium on Coptic Studies, Melbourne 13-16/7/18*. Lisa Agaiby, Mark N. Swanson, Nelly van Doorn-Harder, eds., (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

Agaiby, "Shenoute the Archimandrite in manuscripts at the Red Sea Monasteries" in *Coptica* (Los Angeles: St Shenouda Society for Coptic Studies, 2021).

Due to the pandemic, the September 2020 and January 2021 fieldtrips to Egypt have been postponed and the project team will direct its focus on documentation and data entry until such time that travel is once again possible.



# STUDENT REFLECTIONS

For the first time, **Coptic Iconography I** was offered entirely online. With the guidance of supportive faculty and the assistance of clever software, students were able to watch in real time our iconographer walk them through the process step-by-step of writing an icon. The results speak for themselves! This unit was taught by Ashraf Gerges and Shady Nessim.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE UNIT "COPTIC ICONOGRAPHY I"

By Siby Varghese



I was really excited to enrol in the **Coptic Iconography I** unit at SAC! I am from Syrian Orthodox background and since childhood I enjoyed oil and acrylic painting and always wished to learn the basics of iconography but

never had the chance because the necessary resources were lacking in my home country, India. And so once I moved to Melbourne and found out that SAC was offering such a course, I enrolled immediately.

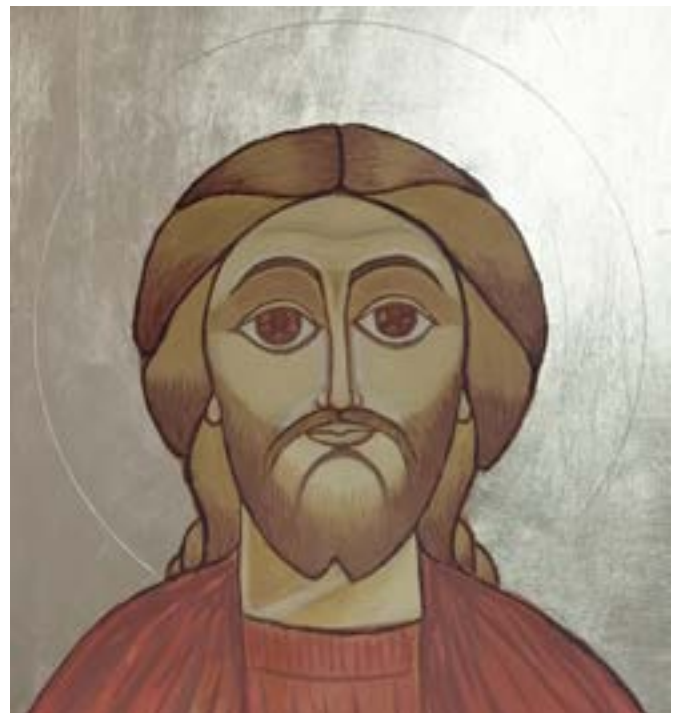
I must say that the experience I had during the semester studying the unit was different to what I had expected. I now understand how conventional drawings and paintings are totally different to iconography mainly because while artists 'draw' images, iconographers 'write' images that have a theological basis. In fact, each step in the process of writing an icon – from its preparation to final touches – is steeped in theological and spiritual significance.

The unit was offered as a combination of both practical and theoretical components. The practical side was provided and enriched by the guidance and instruction of the renown iconographer Ashraf Gerges, and the theoretical component was given by Shady Nessim who provided a valuable overview on

the history and theology of icons. I am deeply grateful to them for their teaching, instruction, and encouragement during the course of this interesting unit.



Pencil sketch of Jesus Christ, by Siby Varghese  
(Coptic Iconography I unit)



Final icon of Jesus Christ, by Siby Varghese



## REFLECTIONS ON THE UNIT "COPTIC ICONOGRAPHY I"

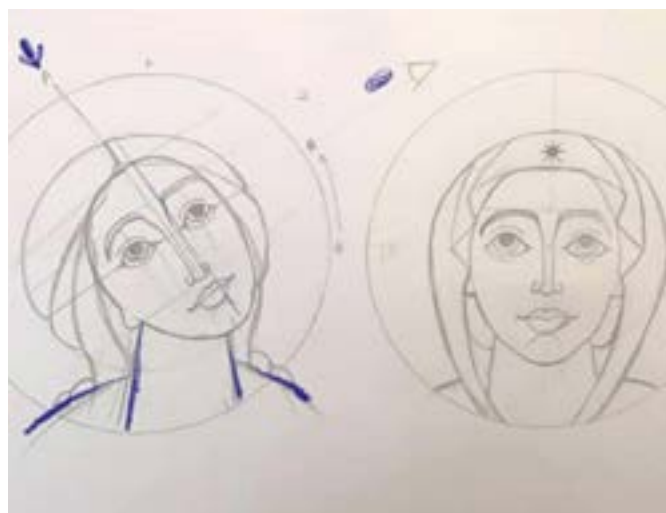
By Benjamin Ibrahim

For my practical assignment, I chose to write an icon of St Macarius the Great. As one of the founding ascetics of the Coptic Church, his example and way of life was instrumental in paving a lifestyle for many monastics to imitate. Understanding his life-story was vital in order for me to be able to write his icon, and so the icon produced reflects and conveys my understanding of St Macarius.

As is common in Coptic iconographic depictions, St Macarius is portrayed with large eyes which symbolise his ability and clairvoyance to see beyond the materialistic world.



Ben Ibrahim studying Coptic Iconography I online



His mouth is small, but with visible lips to signify that his speech was minimal and limited to only when the Holy Spirit would speak through him. While not completely depicted, his ears are large to suggest his attentiveness to the word of God.

The way in which his eyebrows are painted are meant to show that he is an elder and a man of many prayerful years. I also chose to paint him in dark clothes and with a headcovering in order to provide a sense of similarity to the current monastic attire; dark colours signifying detachment from the temporal world.

Icon of St Macarius the Great, by Ben Ibrahim  
(Coptic Iconography I unit)





For the first time, SAC offered 2 new and exciting units: “**Philosophy for Beginners**” which addresses some of the most significant issues in the history of Western philosophy, such as is there a common good? Are we free, determined, or something more complex? And “**Atheism**” which seeks to chart a course through a variety of modern forms of atheism in order to understand the range of atheisms and atheistic arguments, and to appreciate the contribution of theologies to forms of agnostic and atheistic denial. These units were taught by Prof. John McDowell.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE UNIT “PHILOSOPHY FOR BEGINNERS”

By Andrea Sherko



Having just commenced a Master of Philosophical Studies, with no prior experience in the study of philosophy, I decided that the unit “**Philosophy for Beginners: Wisdom for Life**” would be the perfect place to start. I have not been disappointed with my decision! We have covered a wide

range of challenging and interesting material, primarily in the areas of Ethics, Epistemology and Philosophy of Religion, which has, for me, opened up a world of new ideas, perspectives and methodologies. The unit is well-paced and the workload is very manageable. Assessment tasks (two essays: 2,000 and 5,000 words respectively) are well explained,

with expectations clearly articulated. As a postgraduate student, I was able to select my own topic for the second essay, which has given me the opportunity to explore areas of research that I hope to build on in my future studies. I would highly recommend this unit to beginners in philosophy, but it is sufficiently challenging and flexible to also be of interest to students with prior studies in this field. It has certainly been an excellent start to my studies in philosophy, and has given me the skills and desire to further explore this fascinating field of inquiry.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE UNIT “ATHEISM”

By Andrew E. Masoud

In the unit on **Atheism**, Prof. John McDowell guides us along a path pertaining to modern atheistic thought. From Richard Dawkins’ satire, to Descartes’ mind/body



problem, as well as Karl Marx’s social alienation – the unit wonderfully highlights some of the most influential thinkers of the past half-millennium. We are assigned weekly readings that include modern scholars in addition to primary works. We meet on a weekly basis via live video chat to discuss the theories in depth and their contemporary implications, as well as clear up any questions we may have. I was interested in taking the course once it

was announced as I've noticed an increase in atheistic thought in the western world around me. I was particularly intrigued by the unit's structure. As opposed to simply memorizing apologetic arguments, this unit provides perspective from the source while tying in historical context.

After just three months into the unit, I have realized that it has significantly benefited my life. To briefly summarize, the unit has

fine-tuned my ability to think critically. John continually challenged us to further analyse the information and form our own thoughts while incorporating ideas from the previous readings. On a spiritual level, this unit has strengthened my overall faith by sifting through the negative Christian doctrines that pervade every-day life in the west. This unit is truly valuable to students of all faiths - or lack thereof.



*For the first time, SAC offered an important new unit on **Orthodox Mission Theology** where students study the theology of mission from biblical, doctrinal, ecclesial, liturgical, and contextual perspectives, particularly from an Orthodox ecclesial point of view. Primarily, the unit considers patristic voices and then the modern Orthodox theologians, while also engaging with theologians from Catholic, Protestant, and Ecumenical traditions. The unit offers a 'practical' component in that it encourages students to identify the challenges of mission when interacting with other faith communities and cultures in order to allow them to provide theological impetus to support their Orthodox mission practice. This unit is taught by Dr Fr Jacob Joseph.*

### **REFLECTIONS ON THE UNIT "ORTHODOX MISSION THEOLOGY"**

By Fr Andrew Kenneth Daniel Smith

The unit on **Orthodox Mission Theology** that is taught by Fr Jacob allows students to approach missiology as an academic discipline, directed

towards the theology and practice of the contemporary Orthodox Church in Australia. A variety of authors are provided for depth and breadth, while assessment tasks encourage students to thoughtfully apply missiology to our own context.



Zoom class with students of "Orthodox Mission Theology"

## REFLECTIONS ON THE UNIT "SAINTS & SINNERS: WOMEN IN LATE ANTIQUITY"

By Cecily Clark

The journey to the desert through SAC has been so enriching and rewarding. The first unit I chose to enrol in at SAC was Dr Lisa Agaiby's unit on "**Saints and Sinners: Women of Late Antiquity**".

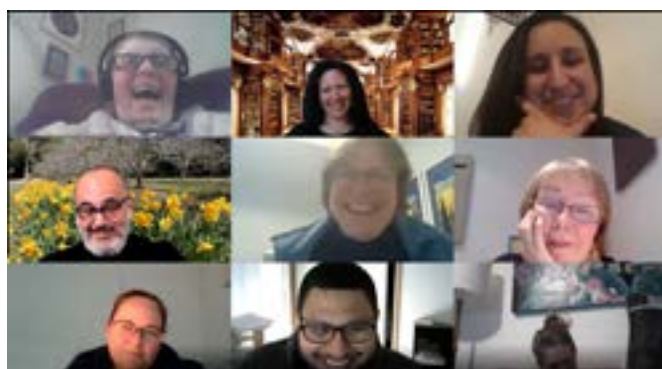
Prior to my enrolling in her course, I had inadvertently discovered Saint Mary of Egypt and was so amazed that she'd lived for 47 years in the desert as a repentant sinner transformed by the grace of Jesus. In fact, her life certainly inspired me during the Covid lockdown in Melbourne. It also caused me to hunger for a deeper spirituality that could be found in 'desert' experiences. Hence, it was wonderful to be involved in Lisa's classes that had so much discussion and exploration of all these amazing saints from Egypt, along with the 'sinners'.

I began Lisa's class with an admiration for Saint Mary of Egypt, and as the unit progressed, I discovered how central the lives of these early saints in the deserts of Egypt were to Christian traditions in both the East and the West. In fact, this is where the heartland of spiritual wisdom emerged – these spiritual guides were foundational to Christian spirituality. Their experience of Jesus and the gospel was fully revealed in their lives and is a wonderful inspiration to us all.

As I 'journeyed into the desert' to discover more about Saint Mary, I found that her ascetic life in the desert displayed a radical dependence on God and many years spent in repentance, prayer, and solitude. I found I could most fully experience her life through art and poetry. I discovered that responding to Saint Mary of Egypt artistically, enabled me to have an embodied experience of her spiritual life in the desert. Ironically, her physical 'martyrdom' in the desert enabled her to live supernaturally. The horizon line in the desert between the natural and the transcendent inspired me so much as it has done for generations. Indeed, my artistic journey with Saint Mary of Egypt gave me hope that my 'desert' experiences could also bring life in a wilderness.

Finally, I want to thank Lisa for the way her lectures brought to life women of faith from

Antiquity in all their variety of personalities and experiences. Her zoom discussion groups perpetuated these characters in a way that I felt I came to 'know' them and now I wish to continue to journey with them.



*Zoom class with students of "Saints and Sinners"*

*(The following sketches by Cecily Clark have been inspired by the life of St. Mary of Egypt)*





The Flowering of the Desert



Remembrance  
of things  
Underneath Spiritual Wealth  
Light the Divine fire  
within yourself

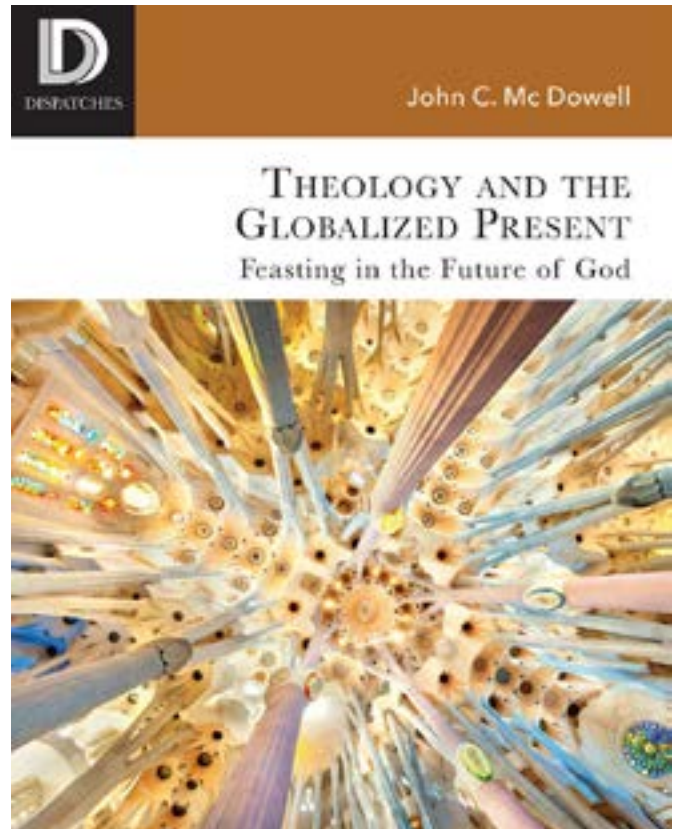
The Desert in the Desert, O Mary of Egypt, leaving behind worldly wisdom as a forgotten dark shadow and fleeing towards to love and holiness to God's Eternal Wisdom. We know you, O Mary of Egypt, for showing us your Desert path of repentance and self denial into Godly Wisdom.

# NEW BOOK PUBLICATIONS BY SAC IN 2020

By Prof. John C. McDowell

*Theology and the Globalized Present: Feasting in the Presence of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019).

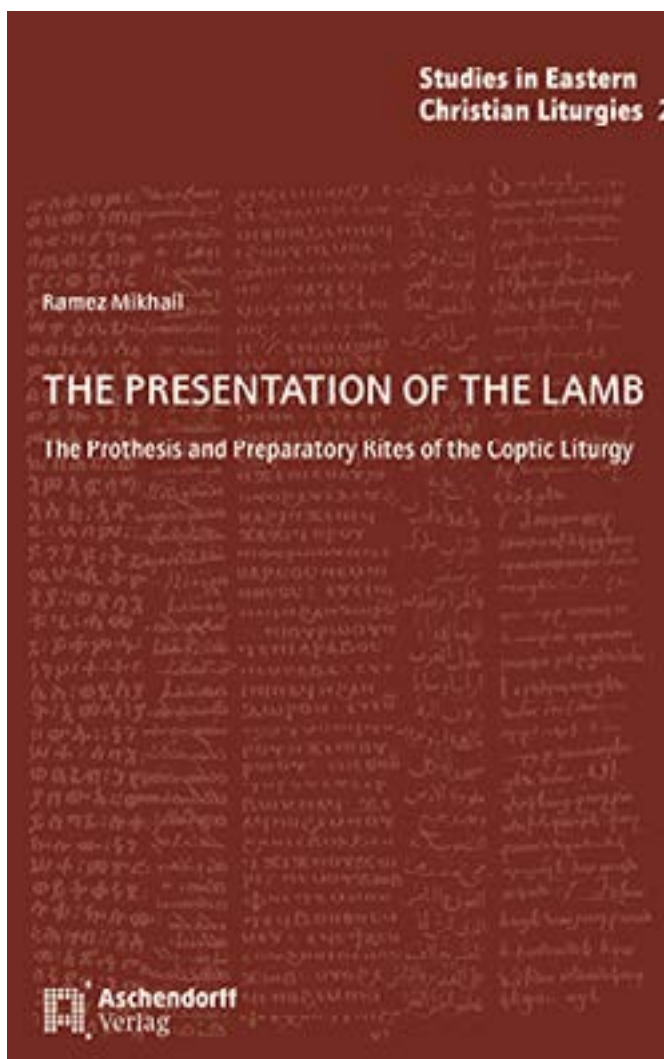
*Theology and the Globalized Present* focuses on the world's future in God and God's creativeness. In response to a globalized economy that reconfigures time to the detriment of human flourishing, Prof. McDowell presents a re-imagined theological vision of eschatological memory and Eucharistic performance. This entails not so much a dreaming of a different world as a dreaming of this world differently. The theological materials offer a temporality that is hope-generating, critically attentive to the inequitable character of features of our world, and educative of ethical wisdom in a self-regulating and emancipatory witness of remembering and anticipating the transformative presence of God.



By Dr Ramez Mikhail (Adjunct Lecturer)

*The Presentation of the Lamb: The Prothesis and Preparatory Rites of the Coptic Liturgy* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2020).

The Coptic Eucharistic liturgy begins with a public ritual known as the prothesis rite, in which oblations of bread and wine are chosen and placed on the altar. While preparatory rites of this kind are common throughout Christendom, it is only in the Egyptian tradition that this rite takes centre stage as a public activity involving both clergy and laity. In *The Presentation of the Lamb*, Dr Mikhail traces the evolution of the Coptic prothesis from its simple Late Antique origins to the Middle Ages, focusing on liturgical practices in Northern Egypt. Drawing upon a wide array of textual and material evidence, he provides the first study charting the evolution of any part of the Coptic Eucharist in such detail. The result is a fascinating glimpse into liturgical change in the Coptic liturgy in Islamic Egypt. In addition to a meticulous analysis of the Coptic prothesis, this work is an essential resource for the study of the Coptic liturgy generally, representing an indispensable reference for a host of primary sources, most of which are provided here for the first time in English.



By Fr Dr Nebojsa Tumara

**Holy Body and Holy Scripture: Anthropological Assumption of Ascetic Exegesis of the Holy Scripture in Early Rabbinic Judaism and Early Rabbinic Judaism and Early Syriac Christianity** (Belgrade: University of Belgrade, 2020).

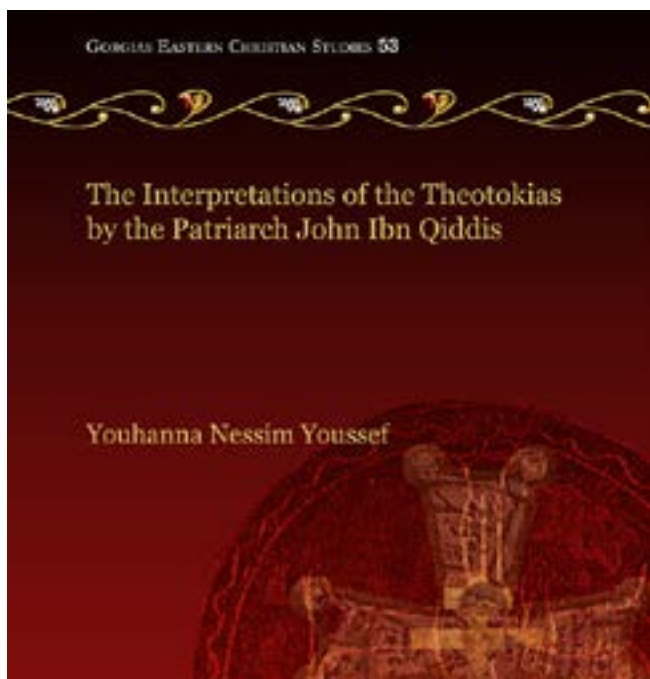
*Holy Body and Holy Scripture* focuses on the dialogue, encounter, and conflict between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity, investigating the process of parting the ways between Judaism and Christianity, the formation of elements that define a religious system, and the exchange of the religious symbols between these systems. Fr Nebojsa also examines the ascetic imperative in both religious traditions and presents how it influenced the hermeneutical strategies of both parties. Drawing upon a wide selection of textual evidence, he presents the role of wise man or sage who, as a religious authority and spiritual master, represents both the Scriptures and is considered a channel through which holiness and the meaning of the text are produced in the community of believers.



By Assoc. Prof. Youhanna N. Youssef (honorary associate)

**The Interpretations of the Theotokias by the Patriarch John Ibn Qiddis** (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2020),

The *Theotokias* are prayers dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God (Theotokos). In the early fourteenth century, the Patriarch of the Coptic Church, Ibn Qiddis, composed and paraphrased – in Coptic – the Theotokias. His work has only survived in a single manuscript. In this book, Assoc. prof. Youssef introduces the author, John Ibn Qiddis, his liturgical, pastoral, and literary activities, and the Coptic language of his time, followed by the texts and an English translation.



## LIBRARY MATTERS By Mrs Deborah Decru

Over the past few months, the St Athanasius College Library has been closed to all students and will remain so until the 2021 academic year commences. The Librarian has been working from home, busy assisting students with email enquiries and preparing for the transition to a new library management system – OCLC's World Management Services. The move to the new system, an exciting collaborative undertaking by four University of Divinity libraries, will benefit staff and students by allowing users to search a single portal to easily access details for print resources in SAC and other participating UD libraries, and online resources available through the UD Library Hub. Users will be able to see when both print and e- versions of a particular title are available.

# Semester 1 2021 Timetable

All units will be taught in face-to-face and online modes

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Unit name</b>	Introduction to Theology	Organisational Leadership and Management	History of Orthodox Missiology	Coptic Church History I: From St. Mark to the Arab Invasion	Apocalyptic Literature
<b>Lecturer</b>	Prof John McDowell	Dr Peter Dobson	Fr Dr Jacob Joseph	Fr Dr Gregorios Awad	Fr Dr Nebojsa Tumara
<b>Mode</b>	<b>Online</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">CT1619A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">CT8619A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">CT1610A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">CT8610A</a>	<b>Online</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">DP2659A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">DP9659A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">DP2650A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">DP9650A</a>	<b>Blended</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">CH1800A/DM1800A</a> , <a href="#">CH2800A/DM2800A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">CH8800A/DM8800A</a>	<b>Online</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">CH1109A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">CH8109A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">CH1100A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">CH8100A</a>	<b>Online</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">BS3929A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">BS9929A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">BS3920A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">BS9920A</a>
<b>Face-to-face Location</b>	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm
<b>Unit name</b>	Coptic Art & Iconography I	Introduction to the Syriac Language	Objections to Christian Belief	Seeking Christ in Scriptures: Scripture and Its Exegesis in the Orthodox Tradition	Hagiography and the Cult of the Saints
<b>Lecturer</b>	Mr Ashraf Gerges & Shady Nessim	Fr Dr Nebojsa Tumara	Prof John McDowell	Fr Dr Nebojsa Tumara	Dr Lisa Agaiby
<b>Mode</b>	<b>Blended</b> Postgraduate: <a href="#">DL8410A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">DL1410A</a>	<b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">AL1700A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">AL8700A</a>	<b>Blended</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">CT2830A</a> , <a href="#">CT3830A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">CT9830A</a>	<b>Blended</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">BS3000A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">BS9000A</a>	<b>Online</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">CH1449A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">CH8449A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">CH1440A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">CH8440A</a>
<b>Face-to-face Location</b>	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	City campus 6pm-9pm
<b>Unit name</b>		Coptic Language – Bohairic I	Advanced Syriac		
<b>Lecturer</b>		Fr Dr Gregorios Awad & Shady Nessim	Fr Dr Nebojsa Tumara		
<b>Mode</b>		<b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">AL1200A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">AL8200A</a>	<b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">AL3700A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">AL9700A</a>		
<b>Face-to-face Location</b>		Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm		



# Semester 2 2021 Timetable

All units will be taught in face-to-face and online modes

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Unit name	Hope in Dark Times	Orthodox Mission Theology	Philosophy & Christian Thought in Antiquity	History of Orthodox Missiology	Major Prophets
Lecturer	Prof John McDowell	Fr Dr Jacob Joseph	Prof John McDowell	Fr Dr Jacob Joseph	Fr Dr Nebojsa Tumara
Mode	<b>Blended</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">CT2820A</a> <a href="#">CT3820A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">CT9820A</a>	<b>Online</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">CT1819A/CT2819A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">CT8819A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">CT1810A/CT2810A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">CT8810A</a>	<b>Blended</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">AP3100A/CT3100A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">AP9100A/CT9100A</a>	<b>Blended</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">CH1800A/DM1800A</a> , <a href="#">CH2800A/DM2800A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">CH8800A/DM8800A</a>	<b>Online</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">BA3409A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">BA9409A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">BA3400A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">BA9400A</a>
Face-to-face Location	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm
Unit name		Coptic Language – Bohairic II		Theology and Film	
Lecturer		Fr Dr Gregorios Awad		Fr Dr Nebojsa Tumara	
Mode		<b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">AL2200A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">AL9200A</a>		<b>Online</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">AR2209A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">AR9209A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">AR2200A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">AR9200A</a>	
Face-to-face Location		Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm		Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	
Unit name				Coptic Liturgy: The Canonical Hours	
Lecturer				Fr Dr Gregorios Awad	
Mode				<b>Online</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">DL1409A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">DL8409A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">DL1400A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">DL8400A</a>	
Face-to-face Location				Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	
Unit name	Coptic Art & Iconography II		Introduction to Biblical Hebrew	Introduction to the New Testament	Uncovering the Past: An Archaeology of Christian Egypt
Lecturer	Ashraf Gerges & Shady Nessim		Fr Dr Nebojsa Tumara	Dr Amir Malek	Dr Lisa Agaiby
Mode	<b>Blended</b> Postgraduate: <a href="#">DL9410A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">DL2410A</a>		<b>Online</b> Postgraduate: <a href="#">AL8609A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">AL1600A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">AL8600A</a>	<b>Online</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">BN1609A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">BN8609A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">BN1600A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">BN8600A</a>	<b>Online</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">AH1149A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">AH8149A</a>  <b>Face-to-face</b> Undergraduate: <a href="#">AH1140A</a> Postgraduate: <a href="#">AH8140A</a>
Face-to-face Location	Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm		Donvale 6:30pm-9.30pm	City campus 6pm-9pm	City campus 6pm-9pm

# 2021 KEY DATES

## Key Event / Activity

### Semester 1 Classes

College Opens  
Final Date for New Admissions  
Final Date for Re-enrolment  
Census Date  
University of Divinity Graduation  
Non-teaching Period (Easter)  
Final Date: New Admissions for Semester 2, 2021 International/  
Domestic HDR students  
Study Week  
Examination Week  
Results Published

### Semester 2 Classes

Final Date for New Admissions  
Final Date for Re-enrolment  
Census Date  
Non-teaching period  
Study Week  
Examination Week  
Final Date: New Admissions for Semester 2, 2022 International/  
Domestic HDR students  
Results published

### University Holidays 2021

New Year 2021  
Australia Day  
ANZAC Day  
Queen's Birthday  
AFL Grand Final Friday (Victoria)  
Christmas 2021

## Calendar Date

February 22 – May 28

January 4

February 12

February 19

March 16

March 19

March 29 – April 9

April 15

May 31 - June 4

June 7 – 11

July 9

July 26 – October 29

July 16

July 23

August 17

September 20 – October 1

November 1 – 5

November 8 – 12

November 15

December 10

January 1

January 26

April 25

June 14

TBC

December 25

# IN MEMORIAM



## *In memory of Beshoi Guirguis*

*“Jesus said, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.’” (John 11:25-26)*

It was with a heavy heart that on 5 January 2020 we farewelled a valued member of the SAC family, Beshoi Guirguis, the son of Fr Antonious Guirguis of St Athanasius Coptic Church Donvale and Mrs Salwa Guirguis.

Beshoi first enrolled in a Diploma of Theology at SAC in 2012 shortly after the College gained its accreditation as part of the collegial University of Divinity, and had a great passion, in particular, for Liturgical and Biblical units. Fr Dr Gregorios Awad – with whom Beshoi undertook a number of units – reflects

how in class discussions Beshoi always displayed a deep sense of curiosity and willingness to understand how theological education can deepen one’s spiritual life, and this was what propelled him in his studies. Our heartfelt prayers that the Lord continue to grant peace and comfort to the hearts of Beshoi’s family and loved ones, and we always remember our Lord’s glorious resurrection. Christ is Risen!

## *In memory of Very Rev. Fr Macarius Wahba*

*“Blessed is the man You choose, and cause to approach You, that he may dwell in Your courts.” (Psalm 65:4)*

With heavy hearts, the St Athanasius College Community farewelled an honoured pillar of SAC and indeed the entire Diocese of Melbourne, the Very Reverend Fr Macarius Louis Wahba who departed in the Lord on the 27th of August, 2020. Fr Macarius Wahba served as SAC’s first registrar and as an active member of the College Council, was instrumental in working to attain the College’s accreditation in 2011. Memory eternal!



## *In memory of H.H. Patriarch Irinej*

*“But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation.” (Micah 7:7)*

It is with deep sadness that the SAC community acknowledge the recent passing of the Serbian Orthodox patriarch, His Holiness Patriarch Irinej on 20 November, and His Eminence Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro, both of whom sadly passed away after falling ill with COVID-19. Both Patriarch Irinej and Metropolitan Amfilohije were actively involved in dialogue with the Oriental Churches, and on 8 March 2016, they visited our College during which His Holiness gave a lecture on “Theology as Hope for the Future of the Church”, instilling a profound optimism in the future of the Orthodox faith. He encouraged all to embrace a unified heart and joyful hope in the Orthodox Church to ensure the ancient faith tradition remains relevant in a dynamic modern world. Their visit to SAC was a joyous occasion and the College community remember their visit with great fondness as we extend our sincerest condolences to the Serbian Orthodox community.



ST ATHANASIUS  
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## CONTACT US

[www.sac.edu.au](http://www.sac.edu.au)

Email: [enquiries@sac.edu.au](mailto:enquiries@sac.edu.au)

Facebook: [fb.com/SACtheology/](https://fb.com/SACtheology/)

**Principal:** Fr Dr Daniel Ghabrial

**Academic Dean:** Professor John McDowell

**Research Co-ordinator:** Dr Lisa Agaiby

**Registrar:** Rev. Dr Peter Dobson

**Librarian:** Mrs Deborah Decru

[frdaniel@sac.edu.au](mailto:frdaniel@sac.edu.au)

[jmcdowell@sac.edu.au](mailto:jmcdowell@sac.edu.au)

[lagaiby@sac.edu.au](mailto:lagaiby@sac.edu.au)

[pdobson@sac.edu.au](mailto:pdobson@sac.edu.au)

[ddecru@sac.edu.au](mailto:ddecru@sac.edu.au)

**Donvale Campus:** 100 Park Rd, Donvale VIC, 3111

**City Campus:** 285 La Trobe St, Melbourne VIC, 3000