



Victor Fakhoury Iconographer and Historian

Iconographers are artists who are inspired by the biblical message and guided by the dogmas and doctrines of the Church. They also “record” through imagery the biblical narratives of Jesus Christ and the Theotokos, and the lives of saints and martyrs. Iconographer Victory Fakhoury however departs from classical iconography by chronicling current events. In 2011 he started to write icons that narrate significant moments in the life of the Coptic Church and Christians in Egypt since the 25 March, 2011 Arab Spring – six to date. The six icons in this series are on page two of this newsletter. On March 15, 2016 the Museum acquired a second icon in this series: *The Christian Martyrs of Libya* (see the Museum’s website, Publications, Newsletter Fall 2014, Vol 8 n.3 for a description of the first icon the Museum acquired : *The Martyrs of Maspero*).

The martyrs of Libya were 20 Egyptian/Coptic migrant workers (13 of them from Al-Our Minya Governorate) and one worker from Chad who chose to join them when they were kidnapped in the city of Sirte by a Libyan militia group who claimed allegiance to ISIL. An online video of their execution on a Libyan beach was published on 15 February 2015. The caption of the video called the captives “people of the cross, followers of the hostile Egyptian Church”. H.H. Pope Tawadros II canonized the twenty Copts on 21 February 2015.

True to Fakhoury’s iconography, the imagery is biblically inspired and based on Sixth Chapter of the Book of Revelations (6: 9 and 11). Behind the 21 martyrs are the “shadows” of hundreds of the martyrs that preceded them in history. Below them incense flows upwards (and through the blood they shed) with our prayers. The 21 are dressed in white tunics with a red cross on the chest and a red line around the collars to symbolize that they were executed (red the colour of their blood). Across the altar above them are twenty-one interwoven martyr wreaths. On either side of the crucified Christ are two angels. The one on the left of Christ holds a scroll of the Book of Revelations open on Chapter Six verses 9-11. The angel on the right is holding a scroll with the names of the 21 Martyrs. This angel is also holding a palm branch which is a symbol of victory. Behind each angel are eight moon shaped crescents: 16 being the date of their spiritual victory (Fakhoury always dates his icons symbolically). Above the altar and Christ is the sun with wings which speaks to the passage in Malachi 4:2 “But to you who fear My name. The sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings”. “Wings” in ancient Egyptian imagery varied by time and period but generally they are symbols of protection, of motion and fan the breath of life. This is another of Fakhoury’s icons with many more layers of spiritual and cultural interpretation that a visit to the Museum can uncover and we can appreciate more fully this unique iconographer and historian.¹



⁹When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.
¹¹Then a white robe was given to each of them...

¹ Special thanks are extended to Mr. Hani Barsoum who kindly gave the biblical and symbolic interpretation of this icon from the perspective of Victor Fakhoury.

Victor Fakhoury Icons Series

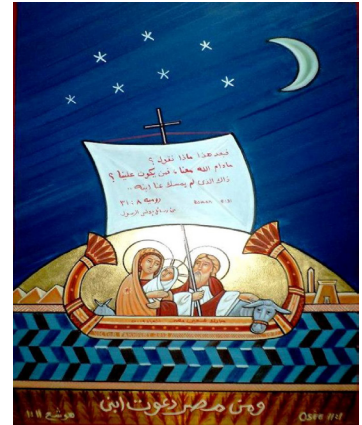
2011-2015



The Revolution
25 January 2011



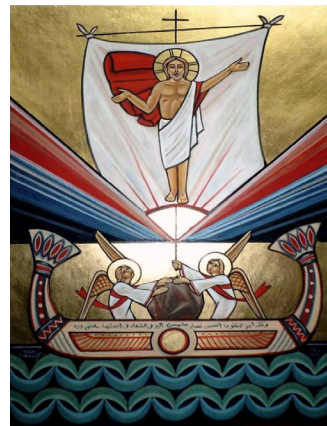
The Martyrs of Maspero
9 October 2011
(in the Museum's collection).



The Church during the Rule of the Moslem Brotherhood
1 July 2012



The Attack on the Cathedral
7 April, 2013
(in the collection of H. H. Pope Tawadros II)



The Victory
30 June 2013



The Martyrs of Libya
16 February 2015
(in the Museum's collection)