

Egypt



The country of Egypt is one of a few transcontinental countries in the world. Most of its land mass is on the continent of Africa but a small portion of the country—the Sinai Peninsula - is in Asia. In square miles, it is about 1.5 times the size of Texas. Most of its 87.5 million people live near the banks of the Nile River—on just



Pontifical Mission Societies Director Father Andrew Small, OMI visits the children of Egypt in 2012.

10% of the country's land. This is because most of the rest of Egypt is desert and unable to support life. The capital city of Egypt is Cairo. The language of the country is modern Standard Arabic.

Egypt has one of the longest histories of any modern country and can trace its rulers and

governments back to about 10,000 years before the birth of Jesus.

The country of Egypt is mainly a Sunni Muslim one—it is the state religion. According to a Pew research study, 90% of the population identify themselves as Muslim, 9% as Orthodox Christian and 1% as another Christian denomination. There are only three “recognized” religions in Egypt: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Other minority faiths are not recognized by government and members are subject to persecution. Since every Egyptian must get a government issued ID card that declares their religion, people must chose between lying about their faith or going without the benefits to which the card entitles them.

Egypt is home to a large number of refugees—the exact number is in dispute by many sources including the Egyptian government. Estimates range from 500,000 to 3 million. While many are Palestinian and Iraqi, a large number of recent refugees are Sudanese, fleeing the war and religious persecution in their own country.

MCA in Egypt

To celebrate Christmas in 2012, our National Director, Father Andrew Small, OMI, took a mission trip to Egypt to visit his counterpart there, Father Antonios Fayez. Father Antonios took Father Andrew to visit Saint Joseph Language School in the Zamalek District of Cairo. Run by the Comboni Missionary Sisters, this school strives to teach students to develop their own “physical, moral, and intellectual talents harmoniously”. Their school website states plainly that each student must learn “to observe thoroughly what God has granted us”.



Though once a school for both girls and boys, Saint Joseph Language School is now a girls-only school for grades K-8. Students from all faiths and races attend the school and are taught to live together in harmony. Their school motto uses words like “acceptance”, “peace”, “charity”, “courage”, and “kindness”.



Some of the newer students at Saint Joseph School are Sudanese. Father Andrew (left) and Father Antonios (right) visited with these children and others from their community on Christmas Eve.

Father Andrew’s Christmas Eve journey also took him to another place where the sacrifices of the members of the Missionary Childhood Association (MCA) are making a difference for the children living in Egypt—the after school program at Saint Mary Virgin Catholic Church in Cairo. Accompanied by Father Antonios, Father Andrew came bearing gifts for all—“crazy” bands shaped like the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building!



Though the face-painting and a visit from Santa were the feature of the party, the day to day work of the program would not be possible without help from our members. The nutritious meals provided to the children at the program are the work of MCA. Sacrifices from MCA members in the United States reached over 1,000 children in that region of Egypt! These donations funded programs for children in need of education, physical rehabilitation, and better nutrition.

What was Father Andrew’s message that Christmas from Egypt? Thanks to you, he was spending it with family—our *One Family in Mission!*

For more on Father Andrew’s journey, go to this website: <http://bit.ly/11tqa2N>

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