

## Journey to Egypt

On January 30th, my wife and I will be leaving for a 3-week trip to Egypt. We'll both be going in order to participate in a pilgrimage organized by a group of Episcopalians (including my mother-in-law) from the Diocese of Western North Carolina. The purpose of the pilgrimage will be to examine the early Christian history of this country with special attention given to the witness of the monastic tradition that developed in desert monasteries only a few hundred years after Christ. The trip will include 2 nights camping under the stars in the Sinai Desert; lodging at the monastic guesthouse of St. Catherine's, visiting St. Anthony's Monastery and St. Paul's Monastery in the Arabian Desert, as well as hiking to the summit of Mount Sinai. There is no doubt that this pilgrimage will be the trip of a lifetime and yet it will not be the only life-changing part of our journey.

This pilgrimage has also created the opportunity for me to come a week early in order to meet and get to know my Egyptian family for the very first time. I am half-Egyptian and have sisters and brothers, cousins, aunts, and uncles – even grandparents – who all live in Egypt and whom I have always wondered about but never had a chance to know. Since my parents divorced when I was an infant it has been the dream of my biological father to have me come to Egypt and now, as he has recently said to me, “that dream is finally coming true.”

I am his eldest child (the oldest of 7) which means a great deal in the traditional Muslim society from which he was raised. I was named “Adam” as a compromise between my parents since it is pronounced similarly in Arabic as it is in English. Many have wondered, over the years, why this trip has not already happened but, for a variety of reasons, making the journey has always felt very complicated for me. If I am honest, I will admit that some of these reasons relate to my own fear of the unknown whether it is of an unknown culture or language or religion.

This trip to Egypt, therefore, will be deeply personal for me and one that will surely be transformative on a number of levels. I hope it will be a trip not only to deepen my spirituality and to discover the Christian roots of this country but also to better appreciate the beauty and rich traditions of the Muslim family of which I am inextricably linked.

Although I am excited to go on this journey, the trip brings up a variety of anxieties. I therefore ask for your prayers as Courtney and I prepare practically *and* emotionally to make this pilgrimage and know of our continued prayers for each of you and for the entire parish of Holy Comforter.

I look forward to finding ways of sharing this experience with the parish once I begin my ministry as your rector in April. Blessings on your own life's journey, Adam