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marital conflict and growth, models of relating, the clergy as ‘beyond reproach’. Clergy partnerships are an increasing phenomenon—men and women do fall in love and marry at college, and, indeed, before and after the training situation.

Given all this, the Church has to decide how best we are to use *both* people: not denying the vocation of either of them, not asking one of them (usually the woman, dare I say) to soft-pedal, not forcing them into moulds that are inappropriate. p. 368

I hope other dioceses are as caring as Birmingham, and that there are places couples can go to be totally honest about their relationships in a safe environment—without this, the task is all the harder. Clergy couples—problem? or opportunity? What is the Spirit saying to the Church?

The Revd Sue Saunders is an Anglican minister at St. Martin’s-in-the-Bull-Ring, Birmingham, England. p. 369

A Woman Iconographer of Maadi, Cairo

Leonie B. Liveris

Reprinted with permission from MaryMartha, International Orthodox Women’s Journal, January 1991

In March 1989 I had the privilege of attending a meeting of Orthodox women in Cairo, Egypt to plan the second Orthodox Women’s Consultation subsequently held in Crete in January this year. Many images remain in my memory of the women I met, the churches and monasteries visited and indeed the whole atmosphere of a teeming city reflecting both great poverty and wealth, and the sound of the call to prayer from the minarets and the bells calling the faithful to Divine Liturgy. And I especially have a lasting and detailed memory of a visit to a tiny studio tucked away in the dome of an old Coptic Orthodox Church. It was in this church that we met an iconographer, Jacqueline Ann Ascott.

The Coptic Orthodox Monastery and Church of the Virgin Mary—Adawia, built on a spot marking one of the places where Joseph and Mary and the child Jesus rested after fleeing into Egypt from Palestine, is being faithfully restored by clergy and congregation. The church is on the banks of the Nile and surrounded by an ancient wall built by the Romans.

Jacqueline Ann Ascott was a student of art history at Oxford University in England and a member of the Anglican Church. She was drawn to the Coptic art form and continued her studies for her PhD on early Coptic iconography and its subsequent changes through to the present day. During her research she studied Arabic and Copt languages, in which she is now highly competent in spoken and written form. Her research brought her to Egypt and in direct contact with the Coptic Orthodox Church. She was chrismated into the church, and her spiritual father and advisor is His Holiness, Pope Shanouda III. Dr Ascott is an outstanding scholar and she is recognized by her church as an iconographer committed to restoring the true Coptic art form in church icons. In February 1989, she presented her PhD thesis before an assembled audience of over 2,000 at the Church of St

Mark, a meeting chaired by His Holiness Pope Shanouda and at which she answered to her work in Arabic.

Dr Ascott is married and has three children, all of whom are Coptic Orthodox, speak Arabic and are already learning to paint icons. She is [p. 370](#) a teacher, and both monks and nuns from the desert monasteries attend her studio for lessons on the early art form of Coptic icons. Dr Ascott's work at present is the restoration of the Church of the Virgin Mary at Maadi, on the outskirts of Cairo.

During preceding centuries European influence in Egypt has affected the style of icon painting, and the unique Coptic art form of the early church has slowly deteriorated. Many smaller Coptic Orthodox Churches use European catholic paintings and prints for their icons, neglecting their own icon heritage. The true Coptic icon is often viewed as belonging to the past and relegated to the old museums, churches and monasteries. The art of Coptic iconography is not as severely restricted in style as the Greek and Russian traditions. Coptic icons are recognized by the eyes through which it is said 'one sees heaven'. Coptic icons distinguish themselves by their 'sweetness, piety and humility', and iconographers avoid representing scenes of torture of saints and martyrs as well as representations of the fear of the Day of Judgement. There is a very strong and popular tradition of icons depicting Joseph and Mary and the Christ child in their flight into Egypt. Joseph is always walking beside Mary, and in one unique style of icon Joseph holds the Child over his shoulder by the foot, a typical action still among the people of today.

In her restoration work for the Church of the Virgin Mary, Dr Ascott has concentrated on icons depicting events throughout the life of Christ with special emphasis on the events during Lent. The icons will be placed all around the walls of the restored church and on the iconostasis. Dr Ascott is a fine role model for women in the Orthodox church. And in a land and a faith which is strongly patriarchal and often discriminatory on the role and position of women, her work is especially valued, not only for its fine art and religious importance, but also the fact that she is a new believer in the Coptic Orthodox Church and also a woman.

Leonie Liveris is Editor of *MaryMarha*. She lives in Perth, Australia. [p. 371](#)

The Christian Single Woman in Singapore

Florence Ng

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In 1985 a Graduate Christian Fellowship of Singapore working committee presented a paper titled, *The Phenomenon of Sex Imbalance in the Churches*. This paper was based on a survey conducted in 1985¹ which demonstrated that females who are single outnumber

¹ A questionnaire, designed to investigate the sex ratio and to gauge the causes for any imbalance, was given to every church-goer in 13 churches on a particular Sunday. The churches were selected on the basis of