

Egypt's Coptic Christians pick new pope

CNN

4 November 2012

Bishop Tawadros, 60, was named the new Coptic Christian pope in a ceremony in Cairo on November 4, 2012.

Cairo (CNN) -- Egypt's Coptic Christians picked a new leader Sunday, a process that involved a blindfolded boy choosing one of three names in a crystal chalice.

Bishop Tawadros Theodorus II -- the nation's 118th Coptic Pope -- replaces the former leader who died in March.

The death of Pope Shenouda III sparked anxiety in the embattled minority group in Egypt's Muslim majority.

Thousands of people flooded into a Cairo Cathedral in March to bid farewell to the 88-year-old pope who led the nation's Coptic Christians for about four decades.

Egypt's Christian minority has been the target of attacks in recent years. The bombing of a major church in Alexandria in January 2011 killed 21 people and sparked worldwide condemnation.

Christians are a small minority in Egypt, although the Coptic Orthodox Church is the largest Christian church in the Middle East, according to the Coptic Orthodox Church Centre in Stevenage, England.

Estimates vary on the percentage of Coptic Christians in Egypt. U.S. officials estimate a 9% Coptic Christian population, but the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, which released a report on the global Christian population last year, says it is closer to 5%.

The leader of the Coptic Christian community since 1971, Shenouda died of renal failure caused by diabetes. He also had lung cancer, which spread to the rest of his body.

In addition to millions of followers in Egypt, the Coptic church has adherents in Europe, Canada, the United States, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa.

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