



ST. MARY & ST. VERENA

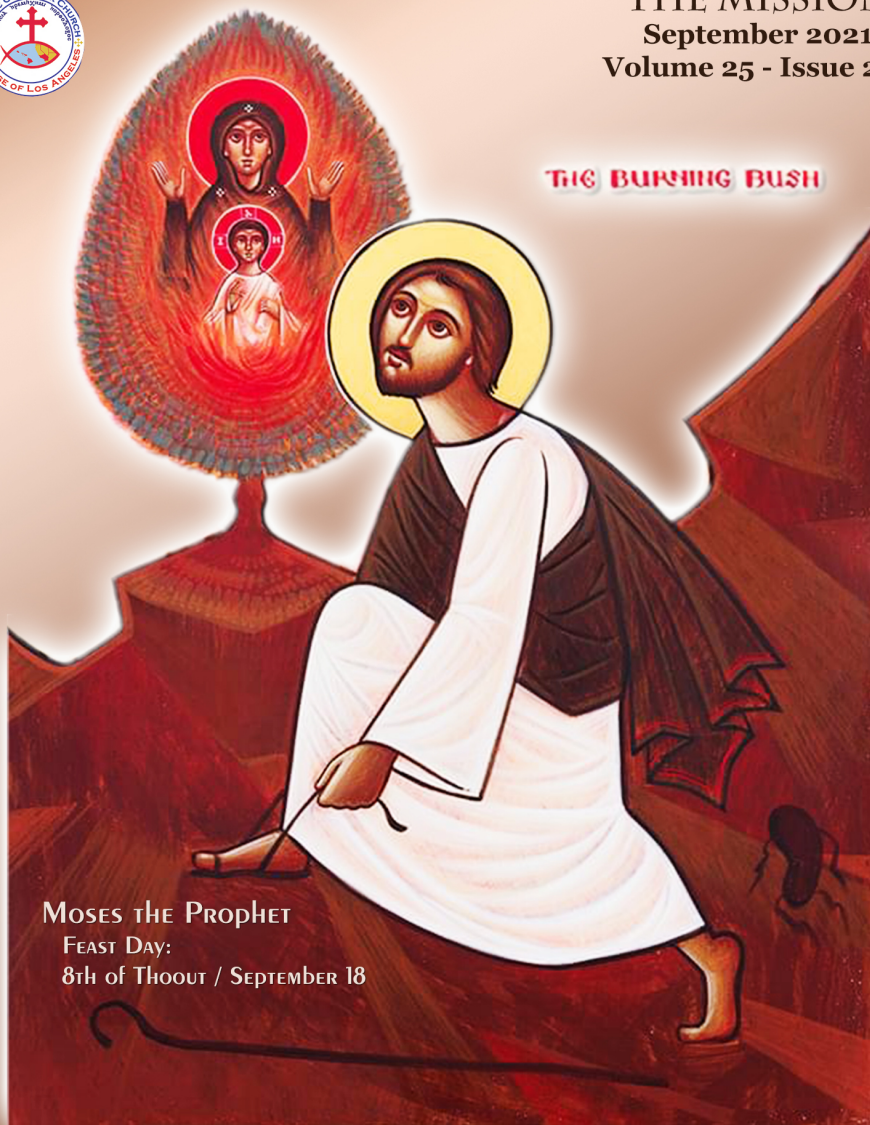
COPTIC ORTHODOX CHURCH



THE MISSION

September 2021

Volume 25 - Issue 287



MOSES THE PROPHET

FEAST DAY:

8th of THOOUT / SEPTEMBER 18

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Yorba Linda, Ca. 92886

www.saintverena.org

*Diocese of Los Angeles,
Southern California &
Hawaii*

THE MISSION

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published by

**St. Mary & St. Verena
Coptic Orthodox Church**
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REGULAR WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Saturdays:

5:00 - 6:00 PM

Hymns Class

6:00 - 7:00 PM

Sunday School

6:00 - 7:00 PM

St. Christopher Group

7:00 - 8:00 PM

Vespers

8:00 - 9:00 PM

Tasbeha

Sunday:

8:00 - 11:00 AM

Divine Liturg

11:00 - 12:00AM

Young Adults Group

Wednesday:

8:30 - 10:30 AM

Divine Liturgy

10:30 - 11:30 AM

Seniors Meeting

Friday:

8:30 - 10:30 AM

Divine Liturgy

6:30 - 7:30 PM

Friday Night Youth Meeting

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The Feast of the Cross

by His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

The Church celebrates the feast of the Cross on the 17th of Tout, (27th or 28th of September), the day of the apparition of the Cross to the Emperor Constantine, and on the 10th of Baramhat (19th of March), the day when the Empress Helen found the wood of the Holy Cross.

The Cross is every difficulty which we suffer in view of our love for God, or for our love for people, for the Kingdom of God in general.

The Lord Christ And The Cross

The Lord invited to bear the Cross and said: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24) (Mark 8:34). And He said to the rich young man: "Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor... and come, take up the cross, and follow Me" (Mark 10:21).

He made the bearing of the Cross a condition for the discipleship to Him. He said: "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). He Himself, during all the period of His Incarnation on earth, lived bearing the Cross.

Since His Nativity, Herod wanted to kill Him, and He run away with His mother to Egypt. When He began his mission, he suffered the fatigue of the service, and had "nowhere to lay His head" (Luke 9: 58). He lived a life of pain, so that Isaiah said about Him that He is: "A Man of sorrow and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). He was bitterly persecuted by the Jews. Once they "took up stones again to stone Him" (John 10:31). Another time they wanted to "throw Him down over the cliff" (Luke 4:29). As for their insults and their accusation of Him, they are very numerous. All these are crosses other than the Cross on which He was crucified.

The Cross In The Lives Of Saints

The Disciples of Christ also placed the Cross before their eyes. They preached continually "but we preach Christ crucified" although He is "to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:23). The apostle St Paul said: "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). He rather boasted in the Cross saying: "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). Even the angel, who announced the Resurrection, used this expression "Jesus who was crucified". He said to the two Mariam's: "I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said" (Matt. 28:5). Thus they called Him "Jesus who was crucified" although He was already risen. The expression "who was crucified" remained

attached to him, and our fathers the apostles used it and concentrated their predication on it. As St Peter said to the Jews "know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

The Cross is the narrow gate in which the Lord invited us to enter (Matt.7:13). "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33); "And you will be hated by all for my name's sake" (Matt. 10:22); "Yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service" (John 16:2); "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:19). Thus the St Paul taught: "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

The life of the Cross is evident in the lives of the martyrs, the abbots, and the ascetics. In view of the faith, the martyrs and the confessors suffered unbearable torments and agonies. The majority of the early apostles and bishops marched in the way of martyrdom.

When the Lord called Saul of Tarsus to become an apostle for the gentiles, He said about him "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16). We can mention as an example, the St Athanasius the Apostolic. He was exiled three times and he was exposed to bad accusations; as was St John Chrysostom who was also exiled.

As for the fathers monks, the Church surnames them "the cross bearers". They have borne the cross of solitude and aloofness from every human consolation, and the cross of ascetism in which they were denuded from every corporal desire. They suffered the pains of hunger, thirst, cold, heat, poverty, and penury, in view of the greatness of their love the King Christ. They also suffered the afflictions and the warfare of the devils in various ways and kinds, as in the life of St Antony, and the lives of the wandering anchorites.

The Cross Precedes Resurrection

Christ was elevated over the level of the earth in His Crucifixion. He was also elevated over the level of the tomb in His Resurrection. He was elevated over the level of the entire world in His Ascension to heaven and in His sitting at the right side of the Father. He was rather elevated over the level of this heaven. These are degrees of elevation, all of which He had begun by the Cross.

Rather before that, He was elevated over the level of self-preoccupation in His Nativity. He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant" (Philippians 2:7). The Cross of the Lord preceded His Resurrection; and His making Himself of no reputation preceded His glory.

Pain always precedes the crowns. Thus the apostle saint Paul said: "if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Rom. 8:17). Thus he showed us the value and the results of pain. He rather considered pain as a gift in life to us from God. He said: "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29). Pain is considered to be a gift because of its crowns.

Our Lord established the bearing of the cross as a condition to discipleship to Him. He said: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up the cross, and follow

Me" (Matt. 16:24). He said more than that: "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27). Such as the bearing of the cross is a condition for life with God, so also it is a test of seriousness and steadfastness in His way.

The tribulations, to which the faithful man is exposed during his life, are a test of the extent of his steadfastness in faith. Thus the Lord said: "in the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). While He was on his way to the Cross, He permitted that his disciples should encounter the bearing of the cross, so that the extent of their steadfastness should appear. He said: "Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). For this reason, the Holy Church has placed the martyrs in the highest order of saints because they were those who have suffered the cross more than all the others, in view of their constancy in the faith. The Church places also with them the confessors who confessed the faith and suffered many torments, although they did not obtain the crown of martyrdom.

If you bear a cross, accept that joyfully because of the crowns, which you will obtain, if you do not complain and do not doubt. It was said about the sufferings of Christ our Lord that He "for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). Here we find the Cross with joy in enduring it, and glory resulting from it.

You will encounter many kinds of crosses. Among them, there are exertion, toleration, patience, fatigue in service and in repentance, and also discipline from God and from the fathers. Do not grumble then, whenever you bear a cross; and do not think that spiritual life must be easy, and its way covered with flowers. Otherwise, on what account will you be rewarded in eternity? And also, what is the meaning of the words of the Lord concerning the narrow gate (Matt. 7:13)?

Christian Life Is A Cross

In fact, Christian life is practically a journey to Golgotha; and Christianity without a cross is really not Christianity. Those who have received their good things on earth will have no share in the Kingdom, as the story of the rich man and Lazarus explains to us (Luke 16:25). We say that, as regards individuals, just as we say it as regards groups and churches also. For Christianity is a participation in the sufferings of Christ, as St Paul said: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death" (Philippians 3:10).

He said also about this participation in the sufferings: "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). So that if you want to live with Christ, you must be crucified with Christ, or you must be crucified for Him, and suffer for Him, even if that would lead to die for Him also.

The Cross And Its Glories

In Christianity, you suffer, you find pleasure in suffering, and you obtain crowns for your suffering, which is transformed into glory. Christianity is not a cross which you carry, and grumble and protest in your complaint! No, but it is the love of the cross, the love of suffering and sacrifice and fatigue for the Lord and for the expansion of His kingdom. It was said about the Lord Christ: "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2).

The apostle Saint Paul said: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake" (2 Cor. 12:10) And after having been scourged, the fathers apostles "departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41) But about the glories of sufferings, the apostle says: "if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Rom. 8:17).

Therefore he said after that: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). And thus the apostle saint Peter said: "But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed" (1 Peter 3:14).

Hence sufferings are accompanied by blessings. The Lord Christ has mentioned them saying: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. 5: 11-12).

Here we find that the sufferings for the Lord are associated with joy and jubilation and with the celestial reward. Truly: because after the cross, there is resurrection and ascension, and also sitting at the right side of the Father.

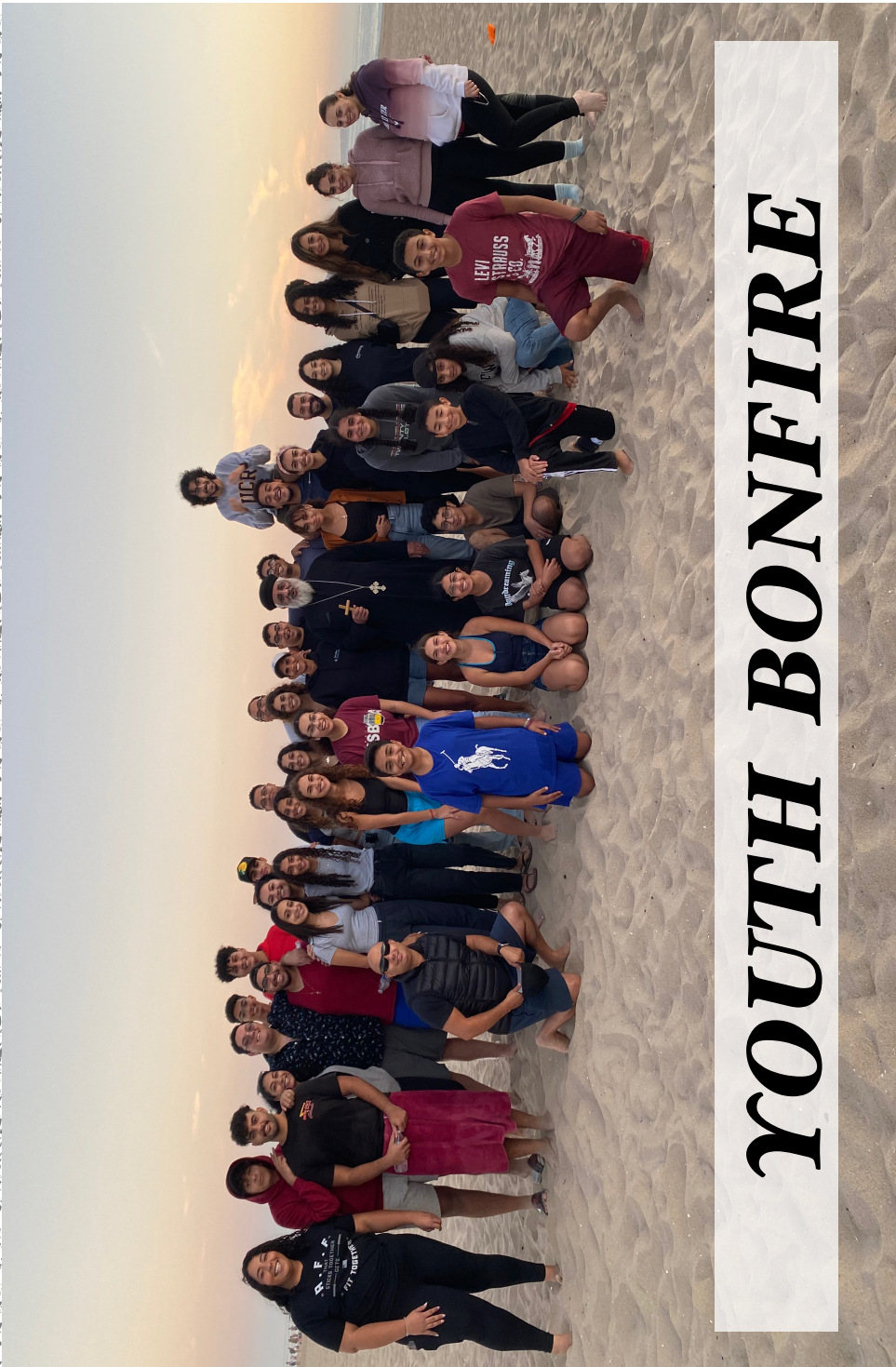
If Christianity were only a cross, without glories, people would have been tired, and as the apostle said: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable" (1 Cor. 15:19). But Christians in their bearing of the cross, look at the eternal glories "while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). Therefore, with the external fatigue, there is peace and consolation.

Saint Stephan at the time of his martyrdom, saw the heavens opened, "and saw the glory of God" (Acts 7: 55,56). What joy had he at that time!

There is another joy, which the martyrs felt; it is that they had completed the days of their expatriation on earth and the moment of their encounter with the Lord approached. Some of them saw the crowns and the glories and some others had holy visions that consoled them. We do not separate the cross from its rejoicing and its glories: also we do not separate it from the assistance and grace of God.

The Christian might carry a cross, but he does not carry it alone, and God does not leave him alone. There is a divine assistance that supports and upholds. It is that assistance which stood with the martyrs till they supported the sufferings, and which stands with the faithful in every tribulation. There is the encouraging expression of the Lord: "Do not be afraid for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you" (Acts 18: 9,10); "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

"They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you", says the Lord, "to deliver you" (Jer. 1:19).



YOUTH BONFIRE



HAND GESTURES



prayer

Having both hands outstretched and open is an indication of prayer. This gesture calls the viewer to participate with the saint in their holiness. If the arms are outstretched and the palms face outward, this gesture is known as an "orans" position, latin for "pleading" This is the earliest existing gesture in iconography. Open palms also signify humility, obedience, and acceptance.



objects

Most figures in icons can be seen carrying objects- gospels, crosses, palm branches, censers, and sometimes- even their own heads. These objects are defining features of the hagiographies (biographies) of the saints depicted. They are calls for imitation and often symbols of a deeper spiritual behaviour in the life of the saint that the iconographer is calling the viewer to pay attention to.



presentation

Most common in the icon of the Virgin, this hand gesture means the figure is presenting something to us. Gabriel presents us the good news of the incarnation in the annunciation icon, John the Baptist presents in the Lamb of God in the icon of the Theophany, and the Virgin presents to us her Son in the icon of her as Ὁδηγήτρια (Hodegetria) Greek for "She who presents the Way."

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The icon as a liturgical object is of equal importance to the hymns, liturgical books, and the vessels used for the Eucharist themselves. The use of icons in the Church was subject to great debate during the iconoclastic controversy, and led to the Eastern Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 787 CE. It was during this time that both St John the Damascene and Theodore the studite wrote profusely in favor of icons, defending their use for reverence and negating that they were objects being worshipped in and of themselves.

IN COPTIC ICONS



blessing hands

In many icons, Christ can be seen benedicting with this hand gesture. The gesture can be shown from either the front or the back, and is a gesture of the abbreviation of Christ in Coptic (ⲓⲏϥⲛⲓϥ). Depending on the tradition the icon is painted in, this can either be based on a Coptic or Greek gesture (ⲓϥ ϫϥ), which is why Christ's blessing hand appears different in Byzantine and classical Coptic icons. The nail mark rests in Christ's palm rather than His wrist, although it is most probable that it was his wrist that was pierced. This represents how Christ is the second Adam who, rather than the first Adam who bore the fruit of disobedience in his palm, the new Adam bore the fruit of obedience to His father in His.



chironomia

Chironomia is a traditional method of hand gesturing used in oration and spoken rhetoric. It was most common in great antiquity, and continued to find its way into iconography. These gestures function to establish a dynamic between the viewer and the speaker, in the case the speaker being the figure in the icon. The thumb touching the ring finger indicates the beginning of an important speech, two fingers up indicates who the speaker is, one finger means "pay attention!" and the two gestures on the left were used to highlight an important section of discourse or speech, which, when used by Christ, points to the Gospels.



God made man in His image, and man in turn makes the image of God incarnate, incarnating that image with wood and paint. When it comes to painting icons, a large component is reflection on the subjects being painted themselves, a synergy between the iconographer and the image. The icon is, in and of itself, a visual expression of the incarnation. So when the iconographer paints an icon they are reaffirming the incarnation and participates with Christ in it, and that process becomes a theological and liturgical act.



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St. Verena

4th of Tout | September 14th

She was a pious virgin who left her own country to serve with the Theban region (Luxor) in Switzerland

Her relics were returned to Egypt on September 26, 1986, after 1700 years

St. Mary also appeared to her to strengthen her during her service

After the martyrdom of Saint Maurice and his legion, she spent the rest of her life in prayer, serving the poor and sick, and guiding young women



On February 22, 1994 the first church bearing her name was established and consecrated

She is often depicted with a comb, representative of her service to others and educating them regarding the importance of proper hygiene

St. Mary & St. Verena Church

offers her condolences to the families of the reposed:

Mrs. Marie Kyrillos

aunt of Dr. Sindy Tadros, wife of Mr. Michael Tadros

Mr. & Mrs. Robert & Catherine Walker

sister & brother-in-law of Mrs. Hanya Ibrahim, wife of Mr. Nagy Ibrahim

May the Lord repose their souls and comfort the families through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

كتاب حياة التوبة والنقاوة لمثلث الرحمت قداسة البابا شنودة الثالث

ما هي التوبة؟

ما دامت الخطية هي انفصال عن الله، فالتوبة إذن هي رجوع إلي الله (1).

والرب يقول في ذلك "ارجعوا إلي، أرجع إليكم" (ملا 3: 7). والابن الضال حينما تاب، ورجع إلي أبيه (لو 15: 18، 20). حقاً أن التوبة هي حنين الإنسان إلي مصدره الذي أخذ منه. وهي اشتياق قلب ابتعد عن الله، ثم شعر انه لا يستطيع أن يبعد أكثر..

• ومادامت الخطية خصومه مع الله، تكون التوبة هي الصلح مع الله (1) وهذا ما ذكره معلمنا القديس عن عمله الرسولي، قال "إذن نسعى كسفراء عن المسيح: تصالحوا مع الله" (2 كو 5: 20).

والتوبة لا تقتصر على الصلح، إذ بها يعود اله فيسكن الله في قلوبهم حيث تسكن الخطية ؟ والكتاب يقول "آية شركة للنور مع الظلمة؟" (2 كو 6: 14).

والتوبة أيضاً هي يقظة روحية.

لأن الإنسان الخاطئ هو إنسان غافل، لا يحس ما هو فيه. لذلك يخاطبه الكتاب قائلاً "إنها الآن ساعة لنستيقظ من النوم" (رو 13: 11). ولعله بهذا المعنى اعتبرت التوبة هي رجوع الإنسان إلي نفسه.

أو هي رجوع النفس إلي حساسيتها الأولى، ورجوع القلب إلي حرارته ورجوع الضمير إلي عمله. وحسناً قيل عن الابن الضال في توبته "فرجع إلي نفسه" (لو 15: 17). أي أنه عاد إلي وعيه، وإلي تفكيره السليم، وإلي إدراكه الروحي.

ومادامت الخطية تعتبر موتاً روحياً، كما يقول الكتاب عن الخطاة أنهم "أموات بالخطايا" (أف 2: 5)، تكون التوبة إذن انتقالاً من الموت إلي الحياة حسب تعبير القديس يوحنا الإنجيلي (1 يو 3: 14). وفي ذلك يقول القديس بولس الرسول "استيقظ أيها النائم، وقم من الأموات، فيضئ لك المسيح" (أف 5: 14). والقديس يعقوب الرسول يؤكد نفس المعنى إذ يقول "من رد خاطئاً عن طريق ضلاله، يخلص نفساً من الموت، ويستر كثرة من الخطايا" (يع 5: 20). إن التوبة قيامة للروح، لأن موت الروح هو انفصال الروح عن الله، كما قال القديس أوغسطينوس..

• التوبة هي قلب جديد طاهر، يمنحه الرب للخطاة، يحبونه به هي عمل إلهي يقوم به الرب في داخل الإنسان، حسب وعده الإلهي القائل "أورش عليكم ماء طاهراً، فتطهرون من كل نجاستكم.. وأعطيكم قلباً جديداً، وأجعل روحاً جديدة في داخلكم.. وأجعلكم تسلكون في فراضي، وتحفظون أحكامي وتعلمون بها" (حز 36: 25 - 27).

*التوبة هي التحرر من عبودية الخطية والشيطان..

• ومن أغلال العادات الخاطئة، ومن السير وراء الشهوات.. ولا يمكن أن ننال هذه الحرية بدون عمل الرب فينا. ولذلك يقول الإنجيل "إن حرركم الابن، فبالحقيقة أنتم أحرار" (يو 8: 36). إنها حقاً حرية لأن "كل من يعمل الخطية هو عبد للخطية" (يو 8: 34). نحصل علي هذه الحرية، إن كنا بالتوبة نثبت في الحق، وليس في الباطل والحق يحررنا (يو 8: 32).

* التوبة إذن هي ترك الخطية، ولكن من أجل محبة الله.

ومن أجل محبة البر. لأنه ليس كل ترك الخطية يعتبر توبة. فقد يبتعد الإنسان عن الخطية بسبب الخوف، أو الخجل، أو العجز، أو المشغولية (مع بقاء محبتها في القلب)، أو بسبب أن الظروف غير متاحة. ولا تعتبر هذه توبة. أما التوبة الحقيقية، فهي ترك الخطية عملاً وفكراً وقبلاً، حباً في الله ووصاياه وملكوته وحرصاً من التائب على أبديته..

التوبة الحقيقية هي ترك الخطية، بلا رجعة.

وهكذا تروي قصص القديسين الذين تابوا، مثل القديس أوغسطينوس، والقديس موسى الأسود، والقديسات مريم القبطية وبيلاجية وتاييس وسارة.. إن التوبة كانت في حياة كل هؤلاء وغيرهم، هي نقطة تحول نحو الله، استمرت مدي الحياة، بلا رجعة إلى الخطية. وذكرنا هذا بقول القديس شيشوي "لا أتذكر أن الشياطين قد أطغوني في خطية واحدة مرتين".. ربما الخطية الأولى كانت عن طريق جهل، أو تهاون، أو ضعف، أو عدم دراية بحيل الشياطين، أو عدم حرص. أما بعد التوبة واليقظة، فهناك كل التدقيق في الحياة، والاحتباس من الخطية. أما الذي يترك الخطية ثم يعود إليها، ثم يتركها ثم يعود.. فهذا لم يتب بعد. إنما هذه مجرد محاولة للتوبة، كلما يقوم فيها الخاطئ تشده الخطية إلى أسفل. إن صك حريته لم يكتب بعد..

التوبة هي صرخة من الضمير، وثورة على الماضي.

• إنها اشمزاز من الخطية، وندم شديد، ورفض للحالة القديمة، مع خجل وخزي منها. لذلك قيل عن التوبة إنها "فاض لا يستحي".

التوبة هي تغيير لحياة الإنسان.

ليست هي انفعلاً وقتياً نحو الله، إنما هي تغيير جذري وجذري في حياة الإنسان فيه يشعر هو وكل من يعاشره أن حياته قد تغيرت، وأفكاره تغيرت وكذلك مبادئه وقيمه ونظرته إلى الحياة، وطباعه وأسلوبه في الحديث، ومعاملته للناس، وعلاقته بالله. (انظر المزيد عن هذا الموضوع هنا في موقع الأنبا تكلا في أقسام المقالات والكتب الأخرى). ونفسه أيضاً من الداخل قد تغيرت. وأصبح قلباً رافضاً للخطايا السابقة التي كان يحبها. ودخلت محبة الله إلى قلبه. وصار له منهج روحي يشعر فيه بلذة روحية.

ولهذا كله، قيل بصدق عن التوبة:

• التوبة هي استبدال شهوة بشهوة. هي شهوة للحياة مع الله، بدلاً من شهوة الخطية والجسد. وهنا لا تقتصر التوبة على الجانب السلبي، الذي هو ترك الخطية ومحبتها إنما تدخل من الناحية الإيجابية في محبة الله وملكوته وطرقه.. إنها حرارة لا تسري في الإنسان، وتشعله بالرغبة في حياة طاهرة ولهذا قيل عن التوبة أيضاً:

التوبة تجديد للذهن.

• تجديد الطبيعة يكون في المعمودية (رو 6: 4). أما تجديد الذهن فإنه يكون في التوبة، عملاً بقول الرسول "تغيروا عن شكلكم بتجديد أذهانكم، لتختبروا ما هي إرادة الله الصالحة" (رو 12: 2).

* التوبة هي المفتاح الذهبي، الذي يفتح به باب الملكوت.

• أو هي الباب الحقيقي الموصل إلى السماء أو إلى الملكوت. لأنه بدون التوبة لا يملك الله في قلوبنا.. أن التوبة هي زيت في مصابيح العذارى، يجعلهن أهلاً للدخول إلى العرس (متى 25).

• والتوبة هي القناة التي توصل استحقاقات الدم من الصليب.

إن الطريقة الوحيدة التي تمحي بها خطايانا بعد المعمودية. لذلك قال البعض عنها إنها "معمودية ثانية" .. إنها جدد للشيطان مرة أخرى. أنها فض للشركة التي بين الخاطئ والشيطان، ليدخل في شركة مع الروح القدس (2 كو 13: 14).

التوبة جمره نار يلقطها أحد السارافيم من فوق المذبح.

• ويمحو بها إثم الخاطئ قائلًا له "قد انتزع إثمك، كفر عن خطيبتك" (أش 6: 7). إنها الوسيلة الوحيدة التي تمحي بها خطايانا من كتاب دينونتنا.. وما أجمل قول الرب في ذلك: أنساها "لا أذكر خطيبتهم بعد" (أر 31: 34). ومن أهمية التوبة في نوال المغفرة، قول الرب "إن لم تتوبوا فجميعكم هكذا تهلكون" (لو 13: 3).

* التوبة هي طريق الهروب من الغضب الآتي.

علي شرط أن تكون توبة حقيقية، وأن تتناسب مع خطورة الخطية. إن توبة أهل نينوى، استطاعت أن توقف حكم الله عليهم بالهلاك. ففلما تابوا رجع الله عن حكمة، وعن الشر الذر أراد أن يفعل بهم فلم يفعله (يون 3: 10) وهكذا في أحكام أخرى لله (أر 26: 13، خر 18: 21، 22). حقًا ما أجمل قول أحد القديسين: إن الله سوف لا يسألك: لماذا أخطأت؟ إنما سيسألك: لماذا لم تتب؟

التوبة إذن هي إبقاء الله عليك وعدم أخذك في خطيتك.

• إن الله من عمق محبته، أعطي الكل فرصًا للخلاص، مهما كانت خطاياهم. فالله لا يأخذ أحدًا في وضع هالك، قبل أن يعطيه فرصه ليتوب.

فالتوبة هي منحه إلهية وهبها الله للخطاة، لكي تطهرهم، وتريح ضمائرهم المثقلة بخطاياهم. وتعيد إليهم السلام الداخلي، وتردهم إلى رتبته الأولى التي كانت لهم قبل الخطية.

إنها يد الله الممدودة، يطلب أن يصلحك.

• إنها فرصه لصفحة جديدة يفتحها الله في علاقته معك، يغفر لك الماضي كله ويغسلك فتبيض أكثر من الثلج (مز 50). فرصه تقوي فيك الرجاء، وتبعد عنك اليأس مهما ساءت حالتك. ولذلك قيل عن التوبة إنها باب الرحمة، وإنها باب الغفران، وإنها باب الحياة، وإنها جسر يوصل بين الأرض والسماء. هذا من جهة عمل الله فيها وما يقدمه من مغفرة. أما من جهة الإنسان فنقول عنها:

* التوبة هي استجابة من الإنسان لدعوة إليه.

إنها استجابة من الضمير، لصوت الله فيه. واستجابة من الإرادة، لعمل النعمة معها. إنها عدم مقاومة للروح الذي يعمل فينا لخلاصنا (أع 7: 51؟)، وعدم إحزان للروح (أف 4: 30)، وعدم إطفاء للروح (1 تس 5: 19).

سنل ماراسحق عن التوبة، فقال: هي قلب منسحق.

• إنها النفس المنسحقة الراجعة إلى الله: إنها الركب الجاثية، والعيون الدامعة والقلوب المنكسرة. إنها أم الدموع والانسحاق والاتضاع، لأن التوبة تلد كل هؤلاء.. تحطم كبرياء الخاطئ، وتفتت قلبه الصخري، وتدخله إلى الحياة الاتضاع قال مار اسحق أيضًا: ذبيحة التوبة التي نقدمها لله، هي القلب الذي اتضع وانسحق، وانكسر بدموع الصلاة أمام الله، طالبًا المغفرة عن ضعفه وميل طبيعته أو ليس هذا أيضًا ما قيل في المزمور الخمسين - مزمور التوبة - "الذبيحة لله روح منسحق. القلب المتخشع والمتواضع لا يردّله الله".

* قال الشيخ الروحاني: التوبة هي عذاب عظيم للشيطان مضادها.

• لأنها تخلص وتعتق المسبيين الذين سباهم بشره. وتعبه في سنين كثيرة، تضعه التوبة في ساعة واحدة. زراع الشوك الذي زرعه بأرضنا، وربى بحرص في سنين كثيرة، في يوم واحد تحرقه وتطهر أرضنا.

إنها تجعل الزناة بتولين.

من لا يحبك أيتها التوبة يا حاملة جميع التطويبات- إلا الشيطان، لأنك غنمت غناه كل ما اقتناه. يا أم الغفران، أن الأب المملوء رحمة، لا يغضبك إذا طلبت إليه، لأنه وهبك أن تكون شفيعة للخطاة، وسلم لك مفاتيح الملوك. بعد أن زار يوحنا الدرجي دير التائبين، ورأى انسحاق نفوسهم بالتوبة، وشدة جهادهم، وحرارة صلواتهم، قال:

طوبت الذين أخطأوا وتابوا نائحين، أكثر من الذين لم يسقطوا ولم ينجحوا علي أنفسهم.

التوبة هي فرح في السماء، وعلي الأرض.

لأنه مكتوب "يكون فرح في السماء بخاطئ واحد يتوب" (لو 15: 7، 10). فبان أردت أن تفرح السماء، تُب..

وهي فرح علي الأرض أيضًا: فرح للتائب وللراعي وللكنييسة كلها. التوبة فرح لأنها دعوة للمأسورين بالإطلاق (أش 61: 1). إنها فرح بالتححرر من عبودية الشيطان والخطية، وفرح بلذة الحياة الجديدة النقية، وفرح بالمغفرة..

* وفرح لأن التوبة هي حياة النصر أو أنشودة الغالبين فيها ينشد التائب مع داود: "مبارك الرب الذي لم يسلمنا فريسة لأسنانهم.. نجت أنفسنا مثل العصفور من فخ الصيادين. الفخ انكسر، ونحن نجونا" (مز 124: 6، 7).

علي أن التوبة ليست هي الغاية في الحياة الروحية، وغنمًا:

التوبة هي بداية رحلة طويلة إلى حياة النقاوة.

التوبة هي بداءة مع العلاقة مع الله. هي بداءة طريق طويل غايته القداسة والكمال. فالذي لم يبدأ التوبة حتى الآن، أي لم يبدأ أول الطريق، كيف تراه سيصل إذن إلى نهايته. والذي يؤجل أول خطوة إلى حين الشيخوخة أو ساعة الموت، كيف تراه يصل إلى قول الرب "كونوا انتم كاملين، كما أن أبائكم الذي في السموات هو كامل" (متى 5: 48).



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