

Highlights from the Life of St. John the Short

One of the most outstanding things I read in near past are some of the situations in the life of Saint John the short. I would like to present some of these situations so that we all can benefit from them:

+ One day, some brothers came to benefit from him, although he did not allow himself to engage in the conversation of men neither did he utter any words of the secular world. So when they told him: "Father, thank God, It rained heavily this year, the palms are well irrigated, and now it produces palm leaves so that the brethren may find material for their work." He replied: "If the grace of the Holy Spirit dwells in someone's heart, it nurtures and renews him so that he brings fruits that are suitable for the work of God."

+ Once the saint was ascending from the Scetis with the brethren, and since it was dark, their guide lost the way, so they told St. John: "What shall we do? The brother lost the way?" He said to them: "If we say anything to him, he will fall into sorrow and shame, it is better to pretend that I am sick and say that I can't walk because I am in pain, and therefore we wait until tomorrow." When he shared his opinion on the matter, they agreed and said: "We too stay with you." and indeed, they stayed in their place.

+ One time, Anba Pemoa, his spiritual father, asked him: "How do you fight evil thoughts?" He replied: "Father, I am like someone who sits under a very tall tree, if he sees beasts and wolves coming at him, and he is unable to face them, he climbs to the top of the tree to be saved. Likewise, I sit in my cell and if I see the thoughts of the evil enemy coming at me, I run to the protection and the hope of God's help through prayers. Thus I escape from the hand of the enemy."

+ One time he was eating with the fathers and one of the elders got up to serve them water. In shame and embracement, no one accepted the water from him except John,

the short. They were amazed at him, and asked him: "How is it that you are the youngest among the brethren, yet you dare to accept this older man to serve you?" He answered: "If I were serving the brothers and wanted to give one of them a cup of water, I would rejoice with the one who takes from me first so I can earn my [Heavenly] wage. Therefore, I accepted the water form the elder to make him earn his wage instead of being embarrassed that no one accepted his offering." When they heard his explanation, they benefited from discernment and wisdom.

+ On day, Saint John the short was eating the communal meal with the monks and a vision was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. He saw three different groups of the brethren who were eating; some were eating honey, others were eating bread, while others were eating dirt. As the saint was surprised by this mystery, a voice came to him from heaven, saying: "Those who were eating the honey, they are the ones who eat in the fear of God and with spiritual joy. They pray without ceasing, and speak about heavenly matters, so their prayers ascend to the heights as fragrance accepted by God; therefore, they are eating honey. The ones who were eating bread are those who eat with thanksgiving and glorify God for His works and gifts that He prepared for them. As to those who were eating dirt, they are the ones who eat with grudges, gossip, and condemnation while complaining, 'this is good and this is bad.' "

May the prayer of Saint John, the short be with us. Amen.

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