

Sunday, June 19, 2011

Where can I see Him?

+ The cross is **the only** way that leads to Resurrection and Life for it leads man in the narrow path, and therefore, it makes him steadfast in the road of eternal life.

+ Hence, the cross is a **grace from God towards mankind**, or according to the words of Saint Peter the Apostle: *“But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.”* (1 Peter 2:20). And to suffer for the sake of Jesus, counts as a *“gift”* (Philippians 1:29) because through the Cross we can taste pain, remember, and feel how much God suffered for us, so we can be touched by His Love.

+ Additionally, **when man suffers, God becomes clearly glorified in his life**. Whoever goes through the levels of the cross [suffering] clearly sees the power of God manifested in his life. The power of God never leaves us, throughout the period of carrying the cross, but if we flee from the cross for comfort and luxury, we become weak and the divine grace abandons us so we may easily fall.

Example: David, being disgraced, oppressed, and pursued by Saul, was strong, mighty, and victorious being steadfast in God. Nonetheless, when he became lax in his strife and turned his back to the cross, and left the army in war and lay down on his bed, anand hungry eyes, he fell and his falling was great.

+ The cross also **purifies and elevates**. It cleanses the soul from many impurities and breaks the bondages of many sins. Therefore, he who is hung on the cross, can rise to the pinnacle of this world.

Examples: 1– **Saint Augustine** says, *“I sat on the top of this world when I did not fear anything or desired anything.”* And these were his true feelings after he has *“crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”* (Galatians 5:24).

2 – **Joseph, the righteous**, *“was wounded in the house of his friends.”* (Zechariah 13:6) when his brothers conspired to kill him by throwing him in the well, then sold him as a slave for a cheap price. He later faced great injustice from the wife of Potiphar and was thrown in prison. All these trial were the steps to rise to glory as he became the ruler over all the land of Egypt, and his brothers said that he is *“The lord of the land”* (Genesis 42:30). This **glory is the fruit of the Cross**, abiding in faith, and companionship with God, despite all the painful circumstances.

3 – **Saint Macarius the Great** was subjected to a dreadful cross at the beginning of his life. He was accused of assaulting a young woman, was insulted, beaten almost to death, and he endured the cross so God consoled him. When the truth came out and his accusers wanted to give him dignity, he fled from the honor refusing to give up the Cross. At this point, the Cherubim appeared to him, and unveiled the Valley of Natrun to him, so the whole area was transformed to a second heaven through monasticism over the following centuries. Thus, it is revealed to us that **He who discards the comforts of the world, heavenly consolation will be poured upon him, and he who carries the cross, will rise to glory.**

4– **Anba Abram, Bishop of Fayoum**. He was cast out of the monastery of Al-Muharraaq under the pretense that he is wasting the monastery’s money for he did many charitable deeds. He went to Monastery of Baramos where the abbot, at that time, Hegumen Yohanna *the Scriber*, welcomed him and was touched by his spirituality. When Hegumen Yohanna *the Scriber* was chosen to become the Pope of Alexandria under the name of Cyril the Fifth, he ordained Anba Abram as the Bishop of Fayoum in 1881 AD. Thus, the light was placed on the lamp stand to give light to Egypt for many centuries to come; so **the Cross was the means by which God is glorified in the lives of His saints.**

+ **Finally**, When we fall under the burden of the cross, we will be amazed to see that Christ is with us, carrying that burden. He is our only partner who carries our suffering with us, supports us, and consoles us. It is a pleasant surprise. Despite our suffering under the burden of the Cross, nevertheless, seeing Christ being with us brings invaluable joy to our hearts. It is as though man has been long searching for the Master, and when God prepared an appropriate Cross and presses it unto him, he is surprised to realize that the Master is right beside him. As if he is saying: *“Are you here, and I have been searching for you everywhere!?”* and the Master replies: *“Yes, I am here, and particularly in this place. I am the partner of those who suffer; I mend their wounds, carry their sufferings with them, and heal their sorrow and comfort their souls... I’m here; this is the place where you will clearly see me more than anywhere else.”*

Fr. Yohanna Nassef
fryohanna@hotmail.com

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL