

Sunday, December 25, 2011

A Girl breathing God

Kiahk praises are rich and full of beautiful words that have deep meanings regarding divine incarnation and regarding the mother of God through whom incarnation took place.

Our saintly fathers loved our mother Virgin Mary dearly, not only because she brought to the world the savior who granted us life and immortality, but also because she modeled to humanity the great unity with God and how to live with Him. She was in perfect harmony with the work of the Holy Spirit within her, in obedience, submission and complete willingness to offer all her life and talents to the glory of God and to carry out His will, without any passion of the flesh nor earthly desires.

Therefore, we see that our Holy Church has preserved for us many of the beatifications and glorifications that the fathers wrote and chanted to honor Saint Mary the Mother of God. These glorifications allow us to chant with them about the virtues of the virgin and to reflect with them on her unique character so she becomes a model for us, the sinners and the weak. Perhaps the month of Kiahk, is the period of the year in which we spend more time in glorifying the Mother of God and contemplate upon her life that is adorned with virtues, and ask for her intercession to help us in our spiritual strife.

During the month of Kiahk, the Church places great emphasis on the vespers praise of Saturday and the midnight praise of Sunday, particularly for their perspective Theotokiyas.

As we know, there are seven Theotokiyas, one for each day of the week. Each Theotokiya is composed of parts that explain the divine incarnation, and many prophecies and symbols that pertain to it. Additionally each Theotokiya includes many glorifications for the Mother of God, the "Theotokos", and many reflections upon her life and virtues.

The Saturday Theotokiya consists of nine parts, Sunday Theotokiya consists of 15 double parts. It is the longest of all Theotokiyas and the richest in its meanings and hymns. In the month of Kiahk, the church offers us a collection of Coptic, English, Arabic and a few Greek exposition songs following each part of Saturday and Sunday Theotokiyas.

One of the most profound passages that penetrate my heart is in the Saturday vespers praise, and particularly in the Greek exposition following the third part of Saturday Theotokiya, where it says:

"You are the chariot of God O Mary, and your birth is unexplainable, O chaste jewel, and a girl breathing God."

Here, the virgin is described as the revered cherubic chariot carrying God which Ezekiel had seen at the beginning of his prophecy (Ezekiel 1), and that the miraculous birth that she gave to Christ, while she remained a virgin, is an incomprehensible matter to humans. Then she is described as the jewel that was not defiled by the world, but rather declined all of its lusts, united with God, and became a girl who breathes God.

What a great word! "A Girl breathing God!!"

When a human breathes, he takes in air which is filled with Oxygen, a needed element for the life of the human body. If a human stops breathing and his body becomes deprived of Oxygen, the cells get asphyxiated and die, consequently, the person dies. This is breathing at the level of the flesh.

On the spiritual level, Christ is our life (Colossians 3:4), as the body continuously breathes Oxygen to live, likewise, the spirit needs to continuously breathe Christ to live.

We, Christians, are granted to breathe Christ by the Holy Spirit through three main practices: Prayer, reading the divine scriptures, and communion.

Prayer in its various forms, allows us to utter the name of Christ the Savior so the spirit moves within us so we become strengthened by the divine power. Reading the divine scriptures is inhaling the breeze of the Spirit, for the holy books according to the description of the church are the "breaths of God" [Ninifi `nte V; Wednesday Psali] or as the Lord said: *"The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."* (John 7:63). Therefore feeding the spirit with the words of the Bible, revives the soul as David the Psalmist says: *"I opened my mouth and drew in breath, for I longed for Your commandments"* (Psalm 119:131). Communion is the highest form of breathing Christ and living through Him, and about which the Lord Jesus said: *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you."* (John 6:53)

Many of us breathe political, economic, social, and sport news, all of which lacks spiritual oxygen, and further more it is usually filled with toxic and suffocating gases.

When will the time come, when Christians breathe God every moment, so their lives become revived, and the image of their creator always shines upon them!?

Fr. Yohanna Naseef When do we become near the level of the Virgin, the girl who breathes God.

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