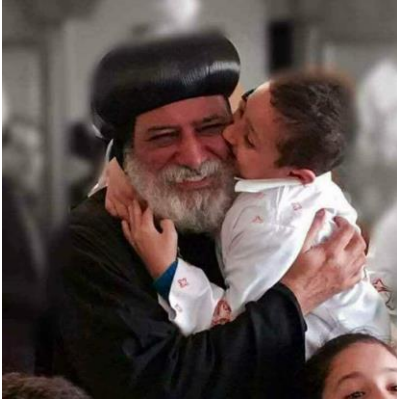


Sunday, October 1, 2017

Memories of the Late Metropolitan Kyrillos of Milan

A Delicate Artist and Deep Fountain



+ I first met him in the midst of a stay in the Baramous Monastery in July of the year 1980. At that time, **he was the supervisor of the retreat house in the monastery.** During my stay, I was able to pray a liturgy with him alongside 5 other youth from the church of Saint George of Sporting, Alexandria. We had just completed our final high school exams and were awaiting the results.

I remember that, upon our request, he came to our room and gave us a private talk regarding the service. He meditated on the word “servant.” In Arabic, the word servant is composed of four letters. Therefore, he explained the word in terms of an acrostic poem in which each letter represented a different characteristic of a servant. **(In Arabic, the word is خادم—khadem. The acrostic poem used these letters to explain that a servant is: 1. Free from sin, that is, s/he is pure and repentant; 2. A compassionate father; 3. Well-versed in and a worker of scriptural teachings; and 4. Humble.)** He then continued by explaining the word “Humble” (متواضع – motawaDe3) in a similar fashion by separating the word into six letters, with each letter representing a different characteristic of a humble person. As he spoke, **we noticed that he had perfectly memorized an abundance of sayings from the fathers of the church.** Afterwards, we asked him to write a specific word of encouragement/benefit to each of us individually. For me, he wrote with his beautiful handwriting on the back of a small picture of Saint Moses the Strong a quote by Saint Augustine that says, **“He who follows Your steps will never be lost.”**

+ After a few months, towards the end of 1980, I heard that **he had departed from serving the retreat house in the monastery to go to Almenya to serve the youth therein.**

+ In 1985 **he issued a calendar by the title of “The Calendar of Peace.”** This calendar was the first calendar issued in the history of the Coptic Church other than “The Calendar of Love (almahaba),” which is still issued even to this day. Within the new calendar, he included the daily readings of the church with explanations through both quotes from the fathers and general contemplations. He decorated it with his fine handwriting and innovative designs through his wonderful artistic talent. I recall that the cover picture of the calendar that year was a picture of Christ pointing his finger to the beholder with two large words printed on the side of the picture saying **“Follow Me”** (John 21:22).

I remember that on one of the pages of the calendar was a picture of a small child sleeping superimposed onto a large hand. This hand embraced the child, as the child likewise embraced the hand. Beneath it, he wrote the wonderful verse: **“My life is in your hands at all times”** (Psalm 109:119). I kept this small picture, and I used to contemplate it frequently.

+ He was ordained bishop in the year 1986 at the age of 33 and a few months and continued to serve in Almenya until March of 1991. Afterwards, he continued his service in Cairo until the Lord opened for him a new horizon to serve in Milan, Italy where the Lord preformed wondrous things at the hands of His Grace.

+ As Anba Kyrillos was Metropolitan of Milan, **he was a very sensitive artist in all things** such as his words, writings, artistry, designs, and buildings. He was also artistic in his loving interactions with people of all ages. He used to serve with a sensitive spirit and a cheerful heart with extreme sharpness.

+ I realized that **every week he used to occupy himself with a different spiritual topic of great depth.** Throughout the week, he would continue to produce contemplations on this spiritual topic. I also noticed that **he used to memorize many passages from Scriptures,** and from these passages he produced many beautiful contemplations with extreme spiritual depth coming from an ascetic heart that has true experience with God.

+ **He loved monastic life and drank from its fatherly fountains until he was filled and overflowed.** He founded a monastery in Milan and fathered many monks and many generations of servants in Egypt and abroad.

+ **He was committed to praying the Divine Liturgy as a daily canon since his ordination as a priest in the latter part of 1979 unto his departure from this world. Therefore, he prayed over 13,500 liturgies.** I prayed with him several liturgies and it was apparent that he was truly filled and satisfied by the depth of the liturgy. For him, it was a foretaste of heaven. Additionally, it was noticed by many that his face used to shine with a wonderful light at the end of every liturgy.

+ May the Lord repose his pure soul in the paradise of joy, and may He accept his prayers on our behalf, that we may end our days as sojourners in purity and arrive in peace to the place of rest and the house of light.

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