

Sunday, January 16, 2011

The Blood of the martyrs

After last week's article, I couldn't get myself to quickly write about and analyze the horrific terrorist act that took place on New Year's Eve, and extract the important facts that were revealed thorough it. Rather, I would like to first convey to you some of the overwhelming emotions and the thoughts that linger on my mind.

+ I tried to find an explanation for the tear drops that fell from my eyes from time to time, and I can't control them, during the last few days. Perhaps it is because I was moved by many things such as:

1 - The atrocity of the incident and the blood of the innocent martyrs.

2 - Every word of truth that was said regarding the incident. I am naturally drawn to searching for truth and justice, so I am always moved whenever I see justice being served albeit partially, or even by a truthful word. Tears dripped from my eyes when I saw and heard and read many bold words which calls for giving the rights to their rightful owners, and lift the injustice from the oppressed.

3 - The faith of many is growing, and the spirit of courage and the absence of fear that cropped up in the church. This is the grace of God which works through weakness. (2 Corinthian 12:9).

4 - Christian spirit of forgiveness that I saw from the injured people, they resemble their Lord who asked for those who crucified Him: *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."* (Luke 23:34).

5 - The great compassion that was apparent from our Muslim brothers who are kind hearted and conscientious, in addition to the spirit of love and solidarity that stood together against a single enemy, an enemy so ferocious and brutal, and by this I mean terrorism. This wonderful sympathy also brought some tears to my eyes.

6 - The spiritual revival that revived many souls and was apparent in the regular attendance of prayer meetings and praise services in addition to repentance, confession, and high level of attendance of the Nativity Liturgy. I felt that this painful incident, through which the devil wanted to harm the church, has been turned to goodness and spiritual benefit for many by the Lord.

+ The most important thing that occupies my mind is the conversation that took place between our Lord Jesus and His disciples, when Philip and Andrew came to Him to talk about the Greeks who said: *"we wish to see Jesus."* (John 12:21) so the Lord answered them saying: *"The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain."* (John 12: 23-24).

Here, the Lord Jesus speaks on two different levels; first level is His death on the Cross, and His precious blood that was shed for every one of mankind. This death indeed has brought abundant fruits and still brings even more today. The second level is our own death, meaning our readiness to give up ourselves and to carry the cross and to sacrifice even to the blood shed. This also brings great fruits in our lives and the lives of many. This is what the Lord meant when he continued saying: *"He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life... And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. This He said, signifying by what death He would die."* (John 12:25, 32, 33).

These two levels are closely interrelated, by this I mean the blood of Christ that is shed on the cross and the blood of the martyrs that is shed on the altar of love. The first is perfect form of the second, and the second is the normal fruit of the first. Because the blood of the martyrs is the fruit of the blood of Christ which is shed out of love for our sake, it is also capable of bringing forth abundance of fruit for Christ. Here the scholar Tertullian said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, and the embodiment of these words is seen when the Apostles and the martyrs shed their own blood for the sake of Christ, so God became glorified and many entered Christianity. The blood shed was a primary reason for many souls to repent and to be drawn to the faith. Great fruits come forth in such manner.

Perhaps the Lord allowed this incident to take place in the Church of The Two Saints, St. Mark the Apostle and the Martyrs and St. Peter the Seal of the martyrs, so we may use them as models of those who shed their pure blood and brought forth many

After St Mark planted the seed of Christian teachings in Alexandria, he nurtured it with his pure blood. The ground of Alexandria, over which he was dragged, became soaked by his blood as his flesh was torn apart and scattered on its streets. Hence the words of Christ were fulfilled through him, that when the grain of wheat falls onto the ground and dies it bears many fruits, and this is indeed what happened so Egypt believed in Christ. This is also the case with Pope Peter, the seal of the martyrs, whose blood shed in the early fourth century was the cause of blessing to the church after his time, and Christianity spread throughout the land of Egypt.

The words of Christ will be fulfilled, and the blood of the martyrs of the church of The Two Saints will bring forth abundance of fruits.

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