

Sunday, October 9, 2011

# The Day of the Lord

This is a real story that took place in Ethiopia.

As we all know, the majority of Ethiopians are Christian Orthodox believers. The Ethiopian Orthodox church is a sister church that was born of the Coptic Church. Christianity was preached by Coptic Evangelists in Ethiopia in the fourth century 329 AD during the time of Pope Athanasius the Apostolic. Among the non Chalcedonian orthodox churches now, it has the largest congregation, which reaches nearly 45 million Orthodox Christians.



Faith in Ethiopia has survived in spite of the harsh period of the Marcist rule for nearly 15 years starting in 1975 because the church was deeply rooted in Christ. The congregation was firm in faith, fasting, prayer, and attending liturgies on Sundays every week. Despite the great pressure and persecution exerted by the communist president Mengistu on Christians at that time, they remained steadfast in their love for Christ and demonstrated for us a great and heroic faith.

Mengistu realized that the secret of strength and perseverance of Christians lies in their persistence in attending Sunday liturgies, so he banned using cars on Sunday throughout the country, in order to prevent as many Christians from going to the churches. Guess what happened?

The results of the ban were completely opposite to what Mengistu's goals. Faith lit up in flames in the hearts of the Ethiopians in defiance to this challenge. At five O'clock in the morning, the streets were filled with the believers on their way to pray the liturgy in their churches. Some walked more than three hours to reach the closest church. Even those who were not regular in going to church and lived in spiritual laziness, felt the danger that threatens their faith, so they were among the first to wake up and walk a long distance to attend the liturgy and take communion. This experience became a reason for spiritual awakening for many!

Let's take a look at ourselves. The gates of the churches are opened for us every day. Where do we stand today?

Do we dedicate Sunday, the day of the Lord, for attending the liturgy, Praying, and taking communion? Is there longing and hunger in our hearts for Christ our true bridegroom? Does this longing grow every day?

We shouldn't be less fervent than the Ethiopian people, or less faithful than them in worship, for worship is the secrete of our strength and it deepens our roots in the love of Christ and the Church. Consecrating Sunday, the day of the Lord, for worship is a genuine Christian tradition that goes back to the apostolic era, and we must never be careless about it. But rather we ought to encourage one another to attend church early, and be persistent in our weekly attendance. This is a sign of our faithfulness towards Whom who loved us and redeemed us.



Let's put before us the beautiful words of the Bible :

***"I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me."*** (Proverbs 17:8)

***"Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good"*** (Psalm 34)

***"My soul thirsts for You;"*** (Psalm 63)

*Fr. Yohanna Naseef*

[fryohanna@hotmail.com](mailto:fryohanna@hotmail.com)



St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL