

Sunday, August 12, 2012

Characteristics in the Lives of the Saints (4)

In this article, we will conclude our topic about the common characteristics seen in the lives of saints. May we strive in following their spiritual path.

1- A Saint is one who lives the Gospel.

2- A Saint is one who lets the Holy Spirit lead his life.

3- A Saint is one who seeks blessing.

4- A saint is one who is not naive or superficial in knowing the bible.

5- A saint is one who realized the nature of his own body and successfully tamed with it.

6- A saint is one who knows how to benefit from suffering in his own life.

When man sinned, suffering found its way to mankind, and being exposed to suffering and tribulation became a general state for all mankind as a result of the sin that entered into the world. Then to Adam He said, *“Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you...”* (Genesis 3:17,18), that’s to say because of sin, earth started to sprout thorns. Thorns are hurtful and painful, a symbol of pain and suffering entering into the world.

Some people complain about pain and consider God unjust although the sin of man is the cause of this pain, therefore they reject pain and fail to benefit from it. However, a saint is one who doesn’t reject pain or complains about it,

but rather knows how to benefit from it for he/she believes that *“All things work together for good to those who love God.”* (Romans 8:28) and understands that **in suffering, there are great benefits** such as:

1. Man enjoys being close to the crucified Christ and exceedingly experiences His love and His suffering on our behalf. By accepting suffering with thanksgiving, we enter into a fellowship with the passion of Christ *“if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together”* (Romans 8:17).

2. Man is awakened from his slumber, and his heart and mind become moved towards repentance.

“The soul does not return to God unless it is removed from the world, and nothing truly remove it more than strife and suffering” {Saint Augustine}

3. Man discovers the truth about human weakness, consequently takes refuge in God, cries out to Him, leaning on Him, and deepens his roots in Him, thus suffering leads to strengthening the faith.

4. Man abandons sin and is purified from impurities, just like gold being purified by fire *“He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”* (1 Peter 4:1).

5. The reality of the world becomes revealed to the eyes of man so he does not place any hope in it, but rather looks up to heaven where there is no sorrow, groaning, nor tears.

6. Suffering brings self pride into subjection, tame the soul and prepares it to accept the work of grace.

7. Man becomes empathetic to those who are in pain and helps them to cope with their suffering.

Therefore, a saint is one who rejoices in his cross [suffering], carries it with thanksgiving, and never escapes from it. In his cross, he sees a beneficial divine provision for his salvation, to the extent that once a saint said: *“Whoever escapes from tribulation, escapes from God.”* {Saint Paula}

7- A Saint is one who is drawn towards heaven

Saints adore heaven as its beauty is revealed to them so they become drawn towards it. They are not drawn to the earthly ambitions and glory, neither are they attached to the vain desires of the world. Rather, they focused their eyes and efforts on heaven, and they hid their treasure in it, *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”* (Luke 12).

They didn’t care where they live or what country they belong to as much as they cared for their belonging to heaven, *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,”* (Philippians 3:20)

The world could not deceive them to sell what is precious for a cheap price. To the contrary, by tasting the token of life in heaven while they are on earth, they are able to see the falsehood of vanity of the world, so they stay firm in the good portion that no one can take from them (Luke 10). They realize that there is no need for any but one and live heaven on earth with this beloved, the one and only, so they transformed earth into heaven.

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