



Nayrouz Feast

The Feast of Living Witness to the Holy Trinity



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The beginning of the Coptic Year, 1737 of the martyrs – Sep. 11, 2020

Our celebration of the feast of Nayrouz is an active form of witnessing to the Holy Trinity, the Lover of Mankind, who works in and for us. We experience the sweetness of the Father's love who awaits our coming, the grace of the Only Begotten Son who honors us by partaking in His crucifixion, and the gift of the Holy Spirit who grants us to be transformed, so that we may become an icon for our Christ, as though we are flying with wings towards heaven.

The incarnation of the Divine Word and His descent to us revealed to us the truth of the Father. In the past, many people worshipped gods with extreme fear, thinking that they would please them by offering human sacrifices. Whether from among their children or from among people taken captive of war. People thought that by wounding themselves with swords to satisfy the gods. They were terrifying gods! But, the incarnation of the Logos opened our eyes to see the Father full of love, Who finds pleasure in His Only Begotten Son and His Holy Spirit that the Son would offer Himself as a ransom on behalf of each person.

His coming declared that God searches for me, runs after me, and offers everything for me, declaring that He loves first, before I knew Him. It is that He desires my peace, salvation and glory; He wants me to share with Him the joyful, glorious heaven.



He revealed to me His practical love on the Cross, establishing a new covenant, that He recorded in His Body, sealing it with His precious blood! He turns my inner wilderness into a paradise that carries the fruit of the Spirit; of love, joy and peace (Gal 5:22). He wants to turn my earth into a heaven!

The feast of Nayrouz and the new praise

The readings of the year begin in the Vespers of Nayrouz, with the psalm: “Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. Alleluia” (Psalms 98:1). He opened to us the gates of paradise! Where we are called to offer a new praise with the beginning of the new year. We are invited by the Church to ask for the grace of God which turns our suffering into praises and glory.

The feast of Nayrouz and enjoying the Divine Love

This feast occurs at the beginning of the Coptic year; and the Church, with its open heart for all of humanity, honors all of the renowned and unknown martyrs, regardless of their citizenships, since the believers carry one joint citizenship in heaven! We know one of the Lord, which St. Cyprian likens to a heavenly garden, full of red flowers (symbolizing the martyrs) and white (the struggling believers).



Marvelous is the Church, because millions of her children were tortured and killed, and She considers it a divine and joyous gift, and arranges feasts that are continuous and unceasing, so that every son and daughter of the Church would wish and desire to become martyrs!

The word “Martyr” in Greek means “witness”. For the martyrs are believers that witnessed to God the Lover of humankind. They discovered the infinite love of the Father, who waits with open arms desiring to receive every believer into His bosom, and to keep them there with Him forever. This is the pleasure of the Father: that I find a special place for myself in His bosom.

“Do not fear any external enemy, conquer yourself; then, you will triumph over the whole world.” – St. Augustine

The martyrs astonished the world with their joy over suffering and their thankfulness to God for tribulations. It is enough that historians of pagan backgrounds witnessed and documented how prisons were turned into heavenly churches, especially during the night of their martyrdom. The prisons on the night before a martyr’s death would be turned into a joyful celebration, in which voices of joy, praise and spiritual hymns were heard. It was not praise indicating their desire to die or pleasure of getting rid of the world and its troubles. But rather, everyone was full of joy because of their mysterious desire to go and be united with their dearly beloved, who they have long awaited with great expectation. **This is the joy of martyrdom.**

[It is said concerning many of the martyrs, that when they foreknew, either by revelation or by information received from one of their friends, the day on which they were to receive the crown of martyrdom, they did not taste anything the preceding night, but from evening till morning they stood keeping vigil in prayer, glorifying God in psalms, hymns, and spiritual odes, and they looked forward to that hour with joy and exaltation, waiting to meet the sword in their fast as ones prepared for the nuptials. Therefore, let us also be vigilant, we who are called to an unseen martyrdom so as to receive the crowns of sanctification, so that we may never give our enemies a sign of denial with any member or part of our body.] – St. Isaac the Syrian Ascetical Homilies, 37 (Massachusetts, 1984, p 172-173)

A perpetual feast and an unceasing living witness

In every hour that we live celebrating the feast of martyrs, we witness rejoicing unceasingly, either through shedding our blood for our Christ, or through accepting everything with thanksgiving. **For martyrdom is a daily spiritual exercise.** It is the celebration of a perpetual feast for the Gospel inscribed in our hearts. It is a witness to the Gospel – to the good news – to the joyful new – so that the heart of the believer is filled with joy, and that becomes a source of rejoicing for many others. It carries a living witness for the faith bonded with the hope that rejoices and practical love!



Martyrdom is the feast of victory over the devil, and all his powers and his evil works.

It is the feast of challenge, I witness to my Lord by hiding in Him, that I do not count myself part of the battle against the powers of darkness. I see the Lord fighting for me, and the enemy of all that is good is trampled under my feet!

It is the feast **of the true vision** for what our Lord Christ revealed to us, that He “saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). Martyrdom is **the feast of enjoying the authority** that our Savior granted us, to tread on serpents, and scorpions, and all the power of the enemy!

The feast of Martyrdom is a **continuous witness that sin no more has power over us,** but we live as kings, having authority over the heart, thoughts, feelings, tongues, work and actions; so that, we walk, both on the inside and the outside, as members of the Body of the Lord of martyrs Himself, and the greatest martyr, the Lord Christ. It is the feast of enjoying the Spirit of heavenly royalty!



The secret to the victory of the martyrs is their realization of reality of their situation and their knowledge of the real enemy, the “Devil!” It is an invisible battle between God and the devil. God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4); and the devil wants the destruction of all. In this regard, the martyrs did not view their persecutors as enemies, but merely as vessels of destruction the devil used to achieve his goals; despite that they are like them, that Christ also died for them.

St. John Cassian mentions a holy elder who came from Alexandria, whom when many pagans saw, they insulted and beat him up. Despite that, the elder remained silent as a tender sheep. So, one of them asked him, sarcastically, “what are the mysteries that your Christ has done?” To which the elder replied, “the mysteries which my Christ has done are that if you mock and beat me like this, I do not hate, despise or bear a grudge against you in anger, and that my heart is not even defiled, whatsoever.”

[Know, oh man that God has not taken away from you His Kindness and Love, for He is beside you, and dwells within you.

He is in you with the Holy Spirit, for we are His dwelling place, and He dwells in the souls of those who love Him and desire Him.



He is the One who strengthens you with His right hand so that you shall not be shaken, He holds you so that you do not fall. Thus, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good...” (Romans 12:21).] – St. Cyril of Alexandria



The icon of Coptic martyrs

This is one of my fathers the martyrs of the Coptic Church who have accepted martyrdom for the sake of the name Christ. It is preserved in the library of the University of Liverpool in England.

What is really striking about this icon is that joy, happiness and the life of complete submission to the Lord is on the face of the martyr whereas terror and fear mark the faces of the two people who are sawing the martyr. **For Christians are tried from the outside, whereas on the inside, they are filled with God and are united with Him.**



[As the Lord put on the body, leaving behind every principality and power, in a similar way Christians put on the Holy Spirit and are at peace. Even if war starts externally and Satan attacks, still they are fortified interiorly by the Lord's power and are not anxious about Satan. As he tempted the Lord in the desert for forty days, what harm did he inflict on Him by attacking Him externally in His body? For interiorly He was God. So also Christians, granted they may be tempted exteriorly, nevertheless, interiorly they are filled with the Godhead and suffer no injury. If one has reached this degree, he has arrived at the perfect love of Christ and the fullness of the Godhead. But one, who is not of this type, still wages an interior war. For a certain hour he delights in prayer, but at another time he is bombarded by affliction and at war.]

- St. Macarius the Great (Spiritual Homilies, 26, 15)



Grant that we may celebrate Nayrouz, so that we may ask for a blessed year for humanity.

And, may every person experience Your wondrous Love.

Yes, come quickly Lord Jesus. Our hearts are inflamed with Your Love. Our hearts will not ask for anyone but you!

Grant that I may celebrate the feast of the martyrs as befits them, so that I may practice the life of witnessing for You.

My life completely transforms into a life of continual joy with You, even during the moments of my continual repentance.

You see me, O God, ever rejoicing in You, so that You rejoice in me, and fill me with Your joy and love.

The heavenly hosts will see me coming to You, so they welcome me with great joy, so that I may share in their praises.

The sinners will see me full of joy, so they will be filled with hope, and share in my continual repentance.

- Hegumen Tadros Yacoub Malaty

Blessed Coptic New Year!

To read the full book click here:

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=1vFdtbHABPGNyM8OYzt9E2FKK7SCkrJvb>



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