



A Sprinkle of Faith

ΟΥΝΟΥΧΣ ΗΝΤΕ ΠΙΝΑΞΤ

Written by A Mighty Arrow
St George Church, Tampa Florida

***Often your tasks will be many and more than you think you can do.
Often the road will be rugged and the hills insurmountable, too.
But always remember the hills ahead are never as steep as they seem
And with FAITH in your heart, start upward and climb until you reach your dream.
For nothing in life that is worthy is never too hard to achieve,
If you have the courage to try it and you have the FAITH to believe.
For FAITH is a force that is greater than knowledge or power or skill
And many defeats turn to triumph if you trust God's wisdom and will.
For faith is a MOVER OF MOUNTAINS and there is nothing that God can not do.
So start out today with FAITH in your heart and climb until your dream comes true!***
-Author Unknown

A *sprinkle of faith* kindled with an enormous amount of love resulted in a massive landmark moved from its location, particularly a mountain called Mokattam. One man's love and faith not only moved a mountain, but moved God's heart to look upon and save a congregation from persecution and death. As we are celebrating the Holy and Glorious Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we often neglect to remember part of the Holy Nativity Fasting is a commemoration of the moving of Mokattam Mountain. The first three days of the fasting are reserved for this supernatural miracle that which was performed by God's hands through His faithful servant, St. Simon the Tanner.

The story of the miracle of Mokattam Mountain is one in which every Coptic Orthodox Christian should be familiar with. It is a story of how all the Copts were united in one body through their prayers and fastings. It is a story of how God works His strength through His servants' weaknesses. Most importantly it is story of faith, hope, and love.

This miracle was performed during the papacy of His Holiness Anba Abraam the Syrian who was the 62nd patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church. At this time there was an Islamic caliph ruling Egypt named El-Mu'izz. Due to religious disputes between Anba Abraam and a Jew who was converted to Islam, El-Mu'izz asked the Patriarch to prove the validity of the verse "*if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain 'move from*

here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20). His Holiness Pope Abraam was instructed to apply this verse to a mountain named Mokattam, which towered over the city of Cairo. The Patriarch was granted three days to work this miracle of faith or face three consequences: acceptance of Islam for all Copts, forcible immigration from the land of Egypt or death of the Christians by the sword. His Holiness called on all Copts for a holy three day fast and to offer fervent prayers to the Lord beseeching Him to intervene with His mercy. On the third day of the fast, The Virgin St. Mary appeared to His Holiness Pope Abraam and instructed him that the miracle will be performed through a pious one eyed man named Simon. With St. Simon's prayers joining the congregation, Mokattam Mountain was moved three times with each outcry of *Kyrie-Elesion*. And thus, the Christians were saved from a great persecution and His Holiness Pope Abraam was esteemed with much respect being offered monetary aid to renovate Coptic deteriorating churches.

Let each of us contemplate on this miracle and on St. Simon's virtues and why God chose him to perform this miracle.

Saint Simon was a man of purity, wisdom, and faithful blessings. He performed all his duties in complete love, not fear, for "perfect love casts out fear" (II John 4:18). St. Simon was a man of prayer as he was quoted "*at sunset I go out with the rest of the wage workers and eat just a little*

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St Simon the Tanner
ΣΙΜΩΝ ΠΙΒΑΚΨΑΡ

so as to keep myself barely alive. Then I turn to prayer and stand the whole night praying.”

St. Simon knew the secrets to a successful life—the life of prayer. He lived the life of prayer and felt the fellowship uniting him and his Creator and enjoyed the depth of this fellowship. Accompanying St. Simon’s prayers was his love for others. He was a man of service esteeming others before him always remembering the Lord’s words “*greater love has no one than this, than to lay one’s life for his friends*” (John 14:13).

St. Simon ministered to the elderly and the sick providing water and food for them. He never became idle or lax in keeping his promises to others and cherished the words of the desert father, St. John of Kronstadt “*if you wish that God should speedily give you hearty faith in prayer, strive with all your heart to speak and to do everything in regard to other people sincerely, and never be deceitful in your dealings with them. If you are straightforward and truthful with others, then God will give you straightforwardness and sincere faith also in reverence to Him.*” St. Simon’s strong and sincere faith was evident when the Lord chose him to perform this incredible miracle of moving a mountain.

Let us learn from St. Simon on how and what to present to the Lord this year. We may not have gold or silver, or frankincense, or myrrh to offer, but we could offer a place of rest for the Lord by removing worldly passions and possessions and allowing room for Him in our hearts. Let us offer to the Lord our humility, our unfeigned faith, our *Agape* love and service for others, our repentant heart, our true promises for if we learn and allow these virtues to encompass our hearts, we can ultimately present these gifts following the Lord’s Nativity. Personal judgements are called for when determining a gift for the Lord, but please take a moment to meditate on the following story:

As Archangel Michael was looking about, he found a

physician in a hospital performing an extensive surgery. Archangel Michael gathered the physician’s perspiration and flew up into Heaven presenting this gift to Lord Jesus and the Lord took it in His hands and looked upon the perspiration and spoke “these are good but not enough.”

Archangel Michael flew down to earth again looking about until he saw soldiers in battle fighting for the dignity of their homeland. He took a few drops of a soldier’s blood and presented them to the Lord, who took the drops of blood in His hands and spoke “these are good but not enough.”

Archangel Michael flew back to earth searching for a noteworthy gift to be given to Lord Jesus on His Nativity. He was wandering here and there, when he saw a thief that was about to burglarize a home. He saw the thief hiding behind a few bushes watching until the owners would fall asleep. While the thief was hiding and waiting, he saw a mother hugging her little baby and lulling the baby to sleep. At this moment, the thief began to think to himself “I once was a little child and my mother used to hug me and put me to sleep. Now I am here intending to steal some innocent people’s home.” And at this instant, he began to cry repenting bitterly about his situation. Archangel Michael took some of the thief’s tears and flew to Heaven presenting them before the Lord Jesus. The Lord took the tears in His hands and looked upon them saying “this is the most precious thing I can accept as a gift on My birthday.”

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:10)

—Author Unknown

May the prayers of St. Simon the Tanner be with us. For a complete biography of St. Simon the Tanner and how the story of Mokattam Mountain was recorded, please visit:

<http://www.faithmovesmountains.com> ☩