



COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

Bishop Youssef

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

My Beloved Youth,

The peace and joy of the approaching New Coptic Year be with you all.

As the New Coptic Year approaches, we reflect upon the impact of martyrdom on the life of the church. Through shedding their blood and witnessing to the Lord Jesus Christ with all courage, martyrs were able to keep for us the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints, sound and unchanged. "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

The strongest witness is the witness of blood. The Greek word "Martyria," from which the word "martyr" is derived, means "witness". Thus the church's faith seed has been planted and watered by the blood of the martyrs.

In Hebrews 11: 33-40 we read, "who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mocking and scourging, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us."

Before his martyrdom, St. Ignatius wrote, "Now I begin to be a disciple. I care for nothing, of visible or invisible things, so that I may but win Christ. Let fire and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the devil, come upon me; be it so, only may I win Christ Jesus!" As he heard the lions roaring, he said. "I am the wheat of Christ: I am going to be ground with the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread".

This issue of *Mighty Arrows* highlights the need for Martyria in the life of the church. The Christian faith in the first centuries spread only through the Martyria of the Apostles and the Martyrs who were able to withstand all the challenges and the diabolic wars, likewise, it is only through strong Martyria that our blood-purchased faith will be preserved sound and strong in our contemporary time in which many blasphemous philosophies and ideas are growing and spreading fast. During this season of the New Coptic Year, may we all celebrate the memory of our fathers the martyrs who considered their lives not precious for the sake of their great love for Christ the King and preserved the faith with all honesty and sincerity.

God bless you,

His Grace Bishop Youssef
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