

# **A Monk in the Wilderness (of Death)**

*by Father Boutros El Maqaari*

From the handwritten notes of the Departed Father Boutros El Maqaari, which were found in his cell. This article is an amazing account of a soul's vision of death, and the opportunity to repent and prepare for the departure from this world.

## **For the Spiritual Edification of Any Person who Cares to Read This:**

An inquirer knocked on my door. I opened it for him, and I found that the Angel of Death came to talk to my soul because my hour had come. I asked him to wait awhile until I finished writing these words, and asked his permission to take a pen and a few sheets of paper with me. He gave me permission on the condition that I do not write those things considered to be secrets or forbidden matters that humans cannot utter (2 Cor. 12:41).

I thanked him because he accepted the intercession of the saints to give me this opportunity. In fact, the hour of death is very fearsome, in spite of the fact that I have been waiting for death for a long time. The amount of fear is proportional to the amount of neglect in preparing for it, meaning that one who puts it in front of his eyes (1 Cor. 1:7) and prepares for, it struggling every day, carrying his cross, denying the self every minute. The person's departure will be a moment of happiness and joy, unlimited as we saw in the stories of the saints. His face will shine with light, surrounded by angels, or sees Paradise open directly to receive him (Acts 7:56).

But one who forgets this moment of death, and finds that death comes suddenly when he is not expecting it (Luke 3:20) will have a grave fear, and terrible agitation. But as for me, I had a mixed feeling of joy for departing (2 Cor. 5:2,4) that is expected, coupled with the fear of the judgment to come (Luke 13:15), and paying the debt, at which time the soul is torn between two strong forces:

(On one hand) is the huge debt of sins, transgressions, and evil ways; and (on the other hand), there are virtues and good deeds and the intercessions of saints and angels. The one group draws one into a deep hole with a bond of hopelessness, while the other propels one toward a better, more exquisite life through the power of hope.

These two forces continue to fight until the situation is settled as I saw and am going to describe. I looked around my cell and looked from my window, and could not find anything in this world that was taking with me in my departure from this world. I also looked deep inside of me and could not find anything that had feet to stand on: neither honor, nor insult, nor position, nor place, nor praise, nor curse, nor money, nor possession (1 Pet. 1:24). And the angel of death did not allow me to take anything pretty, nor ugly, except for an old robe. The robe's age was my age, which is not seen by human eyes, but only the spirit can see it. It was once white, but became dirty with many stains and spots - some small and some large.

I wore the robe, and the angel of death advanced and blew a horn. I saw toward the east, a door leading to a region, if it is valid to use that expression, which was brightly lit so that I could not fully discern the area, but I was very anxious to enter it. But to the west, I saw another region, like a deep hole that does not seem to have a bottom and extremely dark, which put horror in my heart.

I moved quickly toward the east, desiring to enter from the east door to be saved, but as soon as I approached the door, two angels dressed like soldiers appeared and prevented me from entering, pointing to the stained spots (on my robe) and saying: "Those who do these things do not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). They also said that I owe a great debt and that I owe the evil group a debt that required me to go to the door to the west (1 Cor. 2:9). And I actually started to feel a strong field pulling me in the direction of the west, so I screamed in frustration, asking the head of the angels to help me. He explained to me that these stains on my robe, by their nature, are attracted to Hades and there is no way to remove them, because the time of repentance has passed. To my surprise, I saw my companion, who was also visited by the Angel of Death, was experiencing the same difficulty, being attracted to Hades although his robe had less stains than mine. So I screamed at the last moment before I fell in the pit of darkness - where is the Redeeming Christ?

I felt sorrow like never had before about all the things I did and about staining my robe. This brought upon me horrors, but none of the angels dared to rescue me. The signs of victory appeared on the faces of the Satanic group, but my companion and I started to cry and weep. Suddenly, as we were very near to Hades, we saw a bright shining light, and One in the midst of a flame of fire who was beautiful in appearance. And I saw around Him the congregation of saints (1 Cor. 1:1-12, 1 Thess 3:13), and immediately, I knew them one by one, although they all had the same form and the same shape. (Rom. 8:29) I found out that my form is the same form (2 Cor. 3:18) and my shape is the same exact shape as theirs, and every one of them wore a bright robe, but the brightness varied from one to another (1 Cor. 15:41).

I saw to the right of the Lord Christ (Ps. 45:9) a beautiful and delicate woman, her dress was extremely bright as if inlaid with gold (Ps. 45:13), which made it even brighter than that of any other human, and also brighter than the robes of the angels. And I saw in her the kindness of a mother taking off her robe, and putting it upon anyone who asks her - that is, those who have not yet completed their struggle. As soon as they wear it, their image appears in front of God as the image loved by Him, the image of the robe of righteousness of Christ worn by the mother of the Son of God.

Also, all the saints who completed their struggle in endless praises were taking off their robes for every human who asks to wear it, in an amazing communal love (of intercessions and prayers). And anyone who wears one of these robes is fortified against the traps and tricks of the enemy, but this does not stop the attacks of Satan, which are marked with jealousy and repetitiveness.

And I saw an assemblage of those who are completed (in faith), distinguished with bright crowns on their heads. Among them, I recognized the champion St. George, St. Demiana, and many whose stories I did not hear on earth, but are written in Heaven. I recognized them as soon as I saw them, and they became familiar as if I knew them

all my life. From them came a beautiful aroma, extremely lovely in scent, which is the smell of their blood that was spilled in the name of Christ, and for which they received the crown of martyrdom.

There was another assemblage, which I like to refer to as the assembly of loving ones. Every one of them was holding a harp (Rev. 5:8, 15:2) by which praise and joy is expressed continuously for their presence together in His presence, in Him! (Gal 2:20)

Another assemblage has distinguished shining members with their lighted bodies. Some had shining bellies because of their monasticism, others had shining heads because they had no place to rest their heads while on earth, and some had shining legs because they traveled the wilderness and prairies in need, and sorrow preaching the kingdom of God. Others were tortured, but did not escape (Heb. 11:35), so they received glory and exceeding brightness as a reward for their pain, so the members of their bodies that were cut off and tortured became illuminated.

But as for me, one of the angels who was separated to serve those who are about to inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14) took me and seated me in the back rows, because my robe was the least shining. In reality, I was extremely happy and very satisfied because I did not consider myself worthy to be in that place, and did not think that I would share with this heavenly Chorus, in this harmonized and balanced song of praise, which exceeds any description. And I did not expect to see what I saw, or live what I lived through.

It came to an end, and I looked around me and discovered that I did not yet complete my struggle. I was still in the flesh. But my desire and longing for heaven was lit for me, and its fire brightened and I decided to begin to wash my robe in the Blood of the Lamb to prepare for the day of encounter, and in awe of the fearful passage.

May the Lord have mercy on us and grants us salvation in the day of judgment. To him is glory, praise, thanksgiving, and honor forever. Amen.