Saint Abanoub - The Child Martyr

Abanoub was only twelve years old when he was martyred by the Roman ruler. On July 31 our Church celebrates his death, as the day of his birth into eternal life.

Abanoub's relics, as well as the relics of many Christians who died with him, are still preserved in St. Virgin Mary and St. Abanoub church in Samanoud. It is also said that the Holy Family visited that place during their Flight into Egypt. The church still contains the well from which The Lord Jesus, St. Mary, and St. Joseph drank. Numerous apparitions and miracles do occur in that church until this very day. Abanoub was born in a town called Nehisa in the Nile Delta. He was the only son of good Christian parents who died when he was a young child. At age twelve Abanoub entered the church to hear the priest asking the congregation to remain faithful during the persecutions provoked by Diocletian, the Roman emperor.

Abanoub received the Holy Sacraments, then he prayed to God to guide him to where he can confess his faith in Jesus our Lord. After that Abanoub went out, and gave all his possessions to the needy. Then he set off to a city called Samanoud, on foot. While he was walking, he saw the Archangel Michael in celestial glory. The sight was so extraordinary that Abanoub fell to the ground, but the Archangel raised him up, and told him that he must suffer for three days in Samanoud and he would witness to Jesus Christ in other places also.

Once in Samanoud, Abanoub went to the Roman ruler and declared his faith openly. He also insulted the ruler's idols. The ruler was mad and gave orders to whip him on his belly. The soldiers beat Abanoub severely until his intestines poured out of his tummy. But the Archangel Michael miraculously healed him. Then the ruler put him in jail with other Christians who were encouraged by his presence among them, and later were martyred for the name of Jesus.

The following day, the ruler took Abanoub on a boat to a city called Atrib, and as punishment, he hung Abanoub upside down from the sail of the boat. The soldiers, along with their ruler, started drinking and dancing and hitting Abanoub on the mouth. Abanoub's nose bled, but then unexpectedly, the soldiers became blind and the ruler became paralyzed. In their agony they cried to him and said, "Please Abanoub, pray to your God to heal us. For if we are cured, we will become Christians."

St. Abanoub replied, "This will only happen in Atrib, so that everyone there should know that there is no other God but Christ." When they arrived in Atrib, they were all healed, and they cried with joy, "We are Christiansl We believe in the God of Abanoub" Then they took off their uniforms and threw them on the ground in front of the ruler of Atrib. The governor got very mad, and ordered them to be killed.

In Atrib, Abanoub was tortured severely, sometimes by whipping and sometimes by tying him to a steel bed and igniting fire under him. But in all these tribulations, the Lord showed his power and Abanoub was saved. As a result of these miracles, many onlookers became Christians, and received the crown of martyrdom. The ruler then gave orders to cut Abanoub's hands and feet. Suddenly the Angel of the Lord came down from heaven, put the hands and feet in place, and healed him. Then Abanoub got up and walked in front of everybody. Hundreds of people became Christians as a result of that miracle.

Frustrated, the ruler called some of the best magicians in the country, and asked them to help him defeat Abanoub. They suggested that he should be thrown to the poisonous snakes.

"Those snakes have enough poison to kill two or three hundred men." they said. So they put Abanoub in a cell with the snakes, but God, who shut the mouths of the lions at the time of Daniel, tamed the snakes and they did not harm Abanoub. In the morning, and to everybody's astonishment, St. Abanoub came out from the cell alive. Then suddenly one of the snakes crawled out of the cell and coiled itself around the ruler's neck. The man started shaking and he cried, "In the name of Jesus your God, be merciful on me and don't let the snake harm me." The saint who loved everyone - friend or enemy - just as the Gospel commands, prayed from the heart, and then ordered the snake to come down and not to hurt the ruler. On that day, many people who were present including the three magicians believed in Jesus.

Finally one of the ruler's advisers told him to behead the saint and put an end to that episode. So the ruler ordered the soldiers to kill St. Abanoub by the sword. A faithful man called St. Julius wrapped Abanoub's body in fine linen and sent him to his hometown Nehisa where he was buried.

In 960 A.D., his body was transferred to St. Virgin Mary's church in Samanoud where it still lies until today. Throughout the years, Abanoub made lots of apparitions in that church. He used to appear as a twelve-year old child and play with children of his age. Once he interfered in a fight between some Christian and Moslem children. This incident aggravated one of the prominent Moslems who lived beside the church. The priest of the church, who was an old man, got mad when he learned about what happened. In his fury he forbade the Child Saint from appearing. Amazingly, the Saint obeyed the priest's decision and the apparitions stopped for many years.

It was only in 1974, when Father Abanoub Louis was ordained priest at that church, that he summoned two bishops who came to the church and after praying fervently, they gave permission to the saint to appear if he wished. In about two weeks time the first apparition was witnessed followed by numerous miracles and appearances.

A well-known bishop visited Montreal recently and spoke about the miracles that he witnessed himself. He said, "One day, I was visiting Samanoud, and I participated in celebrating mass in St. Virgin Mary and St. Abanoub Church. The mass was in the middle of the week, and was attended by few people. After we finished, I remarked about how beautiful a Church it is, and that I really enjoyed praying mass in it, except for one little thing." I added that throughout the prayers a young boy kept coming in and out of the front door. The priest told me that he did not see any young children, and that the mass was attended by few grown-ups. Then he concluded that that young boy was St. Abanoub.

Another man said that after he attended mass, he went on his way carrying a brief-case.'It was raining, and I slipped, and fell into a puddle. Then a young boy came running at me, and helped me get on my feet. He handed me my brief case, and told me to cross to the other side of the street. I was surprised to find out that my clothes and my brief-case were completely dry. Then I looked for the little boy, but he had disappeared."

May the prayers and supplications of this great Martyr, the Child Saint Abanoub be with us. Amen.