

The Twenty-Ninth Day of the Blessed Month of Hatour – Dec 9th

The Martyrdom of St. Peter, the Seal of the Martyrs, 17th Pope of Alexandria.

This day marks the martyrdom of St. Peter, 17th Pope of Alexandria and the seal of the martyrs. His father was the archpriest of Alexandria and his name was Theodosius and his mother's name was Sophia. They were God-fearing people and they had no children.

On the fifth day of the Coptic month of Abib, the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul, his mother went to church where she saw other mothers carrying their children. She was exceedingly sorrowful and she wept. She besought our Lord Jesus Christ with many tears, to grant her a son. That night, Peter and Paul appeared to her and told her that the Lord had accepted her prayers and that He would give her a son, and to call him Peter. They commanded her to go to the Patriarch, to bless her. When she woke up, she told her husband about what she saw and he was exceedingly glad. Then she went to the father, the Patriarch and told him about what she saw and asked him to pray for her. He prayed and blessed her.

Shortly after, she gave birth to this saint and called him Peter. When he was 7 years old, they gave him to Pope Theonas, as was done with Samuel the prophet and he became as a son to him. He placed him in the theological school where he received his education and excelled in preaching and counseling. He then ordained him as a reader, then as a deacon, and shortly after as a priest. He relieved the Pope of many church administrative duties.

Before Pope Theonas' departure, he recommended that Abba Peter be his successor. When he was enthroned on the See of St. Mark, the church was enlightened by his teachings. It came to pass in the city of Antioch, that a man of high authority had agreed with Diocletian the Emperor, to return to paganism. That man had two children and because of him, their mother could not baptize them there. Therefore, she took them to Alexandria. On her way there, the sea was troubled by a violent storm and she was afraid that her two sons would drown and die without being baptized. She therefore dipped them in the sea three times saying, "In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit," then she cut her breast and with her blood made the sign of the Holy Cross over their foreheads.

Eventually, the troubled sea calmed down and she arrived safely to Alexandria with her sons. On the same day, she brought them to be baptized. Whenever, the Patriarch, St. Peter tried to baptize them, the water would solidify as stone. This happened three times. When he questioned her, she informed him of what had happened to her at sea. He marvelled and praised God saying, "That is what the church proclaims, that it is one baptism." Therefore, the baptism she performed in the sea was accepted by the Lord.

Also in the days of this Pope, Arius the heretic appeared and St. Peter advised him several times to turn from his wicked thoughts, but he would not hearken to him. Consequently, he excommunicated him and prevented him from the fellowship of the church. Arius contacted Emperor Maximianus, the infidel, and reported to him that Peter, the Patriarch of Alexandria, incited the people not to worship the gods. The Emperor was outraged and he sent messengers with orders to cut off his head. When they arrived in Alexandria, they attacked the people and destroyed most of the cities of Egypt. They robbed all their valuables, their women and children. In total, about 840 thousand of them were killed, some with the sword, some with starvation and some with imprisonment. Then they returned to Alexandria and captured the father, the Patriarch, and imprisoned him.

When the people heard about their shepherd's arrest, they gathered in front of the prison door and wanted to save him by force. The officer in charge of his slaying was worried that the general peace would be disrupted, so he postponed the execution till the next day. When the saint saw what had happened, he wanted to deliver himself to death for his people, for he feared what might happen to his flock. He wished to depart and be with Christ, without causing any disturbances or troubles. He sent for his people and he comforted them and advised them to adhere to the true faith.

When Arius, the infidel, learned that St. Peter was departing to be with the Lord, leaving him under the band of excommunication, he entreated him, through the high priests, to absolve him. St. Peter refused and told them that the Lord Christ had appeared to him this night in a vision, wearing a torn robe. St. Peter asked Him, "My Lord, who rent Your robe?" The Lord replied, "Arius has rent My robe, because he separated Me from My Father. Beware of accepting him."

After this, St. Peter summoned the Emperor's messenger in secret and advised him to dig a hole in the prison's wall on the side where there were no Christians. The officer was amazed at the bravery of the father and he did as he commanded him. He took him out of prison secretly and brought him outside the city, to where the tomb of St. Mark the evangelist, Egypt's evangelist. There, he knelt down and asked

the Lord, "Let the shedding of my blood mark the end of the worship of idols and be the end of the shedding of the blood of Christians." A voice came from heaven and was heard by a saintly virgin who was near that place. It said, "Amen. May it be to you according to your wishes." When he finished his prayer, the swordsman advanced and cut off his holy head.

The body remained in its place until the people went out hurriedly from the city to the place where he was martyred, because they did not know what had happened. They took the pure body and dressed it in the pontifical clothes and seated him on the seat of St. Mark, which he refused to sit on during his life. He used to say that he saw the power of God sitting on the Chair and therefore, he did not dare to sit on it. Then they placed his body with the bodies of the saints. He occupied the throne of St. Mark for 11 years.

His prayers be with us. Amen.