

# Saint Moses the Black

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## His life

- Very well known story, so get the kids to try and recall it
- Key aspects
  - St Moses the Black, a double reference to his Ethiopian background and his repentance
  - Lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century
  - Started his life as a robber, fornicator, murderer, drunkard and idol worshipper
  - He led a gang of 70 thieves who were notorious throughout the land
  - **He felt that he wanted to know God, and used to look to the sun and say O Sun!! if you are God, let me know it. Then he said, And you O God whom I do not know, let me know you.**
  - He heard a voice saying go to the monks of Wadi-el-Natorun (desert in Egypt) and they will tell you about God
  - He met St. Isidorous, one of the saints in the monastery who was scared by the sight of this huge man, who was carrying a sword
  - St Moses told him that he only wanted to know about the true God, and so not to fear
  - **He took him to St Macarius the great, who spoke to him about God, who forgives any sin, no matter how big, and that through true confession and repentance, one is given a clean slate**
  - St Moses the black started to confess his sins with true repentance, and St Macarius saw a tablet that was all black, and an angel wiping it clean as he confessed.
  - The devil continued to tempt him with his old habits of drinking and sexual desires amongst other things, and St Moses the black would run from his cave to St Isidorous to confess. One night he ran to St Isidorous seven times. St Isidorous comforted him, and told him to look on his right and left: on his left he saw demons who were enraged at his repentance, on his right he saw angels who were comforting him and rejoicing at his repentance.
  - He was baptised, and after many years of testing, he became a monk in the monastery.
  - **St Moses the black used his talents to serve the monks in the monastery.** For example, he used his strength to serve the older monks. He used to go round to their cells and take their water pots and fill them with water which he brought from a well at a far distance from the monastery.
  - He grew in spirituality, and eventually became the father of 500 monks.
  - One day, he went with some elders to St. Macarius the Great, who said to them, I see among you one to whom belong the crown of martyrdom. St. Moses answered him, Probably it is me, for it is written: 'For all they that take with the sword, shall perish with the sword.' (Matt. 26:25) After they returned to the monastery, it did not take long until the Barbarians attacked the monastery. He told the brethren, Whoever wants to escape, let him escape. They asked him, And you O father, why do you not also escape? He replied that he had waited for this day for long time. The

Barbarians entered the monastery and killed him with seven other brothers. One of the brethren was hiding, and saw the angel of the Lord, with a crown in his hand standing by and waiting for him. He went out from his hiding place to the Barbarians and he was also martyred.

- His martyrdom was at St Bishoy monastery, but his body now resides at the baramous monastery, near his cave which is still there today.
- May his blessings be with us all AMEN.

## Lessons from his life

Let us contemplate in the power of repentance, and what it did. It transformed an infidel slave who was a murderer, adulterer and robber into a great Father, teacher, comforter, and priest who wrote rules for the monks, and saint whose name is mentioned on the altar in our prayers.

### Stage 1 – The Desire to change

The key to St Moses' repentance is his search for God. Even the worst person on this earth, if he searches for God, God will reveal himself.

- **St Moses felt that he wanted to know God, and used to look to the sun and say O Sun!! if you are God, let me know it. Then he said, And you O God whom I do not know, let me know you.**

The same applies to us. We must always look for God, and try to have a relationship with Him, regardless of how many sins we have, or how hopeless it seems. How?

1. Prayer → Be honest in prayer and say, "God I don't know You. I don't feel anything towards you. Please let me know You, and feel Your presence. I don't have the desire to change, I enjoy living in sin, so please give me the desire to change."
2. Bible → The bible is the best tool to use in Your search for God. Everything about God is found in the bible.
3. Liturgy, abouna, servants etc.

### Stage 2 – Repentance

Once you have the desire to change, the next stage is confession and repentance.

1. Get up and leave → St Moses the black heard the voice telling him to go see the monks in the desert, so he got up, left his band of robbers, and went to the monastery. Similarly, the prodigal son when he realised that he was living in sin, got up and left to go back to his Father's house. When we realise we are living in Sin, we should escape everything that encourages our sin: e.g. wrong friends, bad music etc.

2. Go speak to abouna → St Moses the black possibly had the best confession session ever. His confession must have been so truthful, and with a feeling of great repentance, such that St Macarius saw the black slate be wiped clean by the angel. Do we feel that way when we confess, or is it just a routine?
3. Repentance → Confession must be accompanied by true repentance, feeling sorry for the sins we have committed, and promising to try and not fall in the same sins again. No matter how big your sin is, God is happy to forgive You. Who would have ever believed that Moses the robber and murderer would become St Moses the great saint? Similarly, who would have believed that the first person to enter the kingdom of heaven was the thief on the cross? It is because of their repentant hearts!

**St Moses used to say: let us use great care as much as we can and the Lord will help our weaknesses. Because the door of forgiveness is always open to those who repent as long as we are in the flesh.**

It would be a great idea to ask for the intercessions of St Moses the black and the right hand thief each time you are confessing, and repenting.

### Stage 3 – Transformation

*Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

After your repentance, your mind becomes renewed, and you begin to live the perfect will of God. God has a dream for your life! It's not something random, or boring, but something awesome that God has planned just for you. It is up to you whether or not to trust in this plan.

The talents you receive, you must use to serve God. St Moses the black used his strength to serve the monks. He used to go round to their cells and take their water pots and fill them with water which he brought from a well at a far distance from the monastery. Similarly, we should use our talents to serve God and live his plan for our life.

### **Summary**

- Even the worst person on earth, if He looks for God, God will show himself to him
- Intercessions of St Moses the black in confession and repentance.
- Transforming your talents into works for Christ

### **Extra Information**

- [http://www.copticchurch.net/synaxarium/10\\_24.html#1](http://www.copticchurch.net/synaxarium/10_24.html#1)
- <http://stmary-church.com/stmoses.pdf>

## Some Sayings from his life

If it is so for the things of this world, how much more it is when the soul that chooses to serve God succeed in pleasing Him! Truly, I say to you that its pleasure is greater, because at the time of its departure, its good deeds meets her there and the angels are pleased when they see her coming free from the powers of the darkness. Because when the soul leaves the body is accompanied by the angels, it is then met by the powers of the enemy who try to hinder it because of what it owes them. The angels then have no business to try to defend it, but only its good deeds can defend it and protect it from its accusers. And when its victory is complete, the angels are pleased for that soul. They then praise God with it until it meets the Lord with gladness. At that moment it forgets all the sorrows of this world.

Let us possess the desire to be with God, because those who desire God protect themselves from the desire to commit adultery. Let us possess pure love for everyone to protect us from envy and jealousy. Let us be humble in every act and every deed. Let us tolerate being cursed and teased to rid ourselves of pride. Let us be kind to all our neighbours to avoid condemnation. Let us reject the glories of the world and its honours to avoid false pride. Let us use the tongue to glorify God and to protect ourselves from lying.