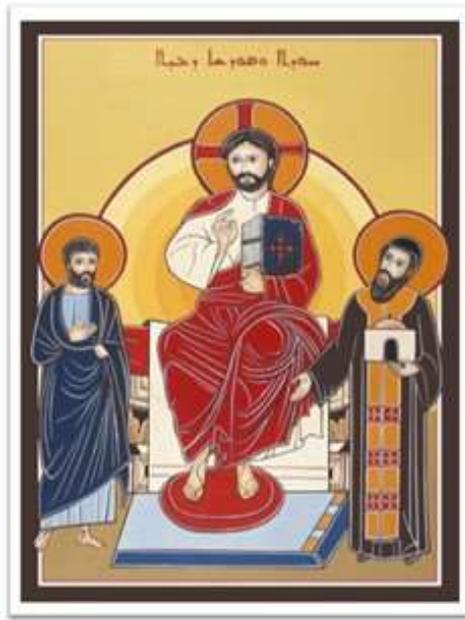


The Consecration of the Church



We begin our new liturgical year with the consecration of the Church. Where does this word come from? Consecration (and renewal) of the Church.

It comes from the Old Testament, 1 Maccabees Chapter 4, when Judas and his brothers crushed their enemies. They entered the temple, cleansed it, and purified the sanctuary.

Then, they rededicated what was defiled by the gentiles. They repaired certain things, but a lot had been destroyed, torn down and carried away. Lest it be a lasting shame to them that the Gentiles had defiled it.

Judas, his brothers, and the entire assembly of Israel then decreed that every year, eight days will be dedicated for the consecration of the altar and should be celebrated with joy and gladness.

A lot of time we defile our church, our Christianity and the image of God, in different ways. With the consecration and the renewal of the Church in the beginning of the new liturgical year, we rededicate, dedicate again our life to fight all that had defiled our lives, just like Judas Maccabee did;

this Jewish guerrilla leader who defended his people saving them from the invasion and preserving their religion.

Then, when Jesus asks: “But who do you say that I am?”, we can reply with Simon Peter saying: “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Our letter to the Hebrews talks about the difference between the worship of the old covenant and the new covenant, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This letter tells us that the first tabernacle symbolizes the present time. The sacrifices and gifts related only to food, drinks, and various washings; in other words, imposed regulations for the body. But with Jesus, we have a chance at reformation.

As a Church community living in the 21st century, we are benefiting and living in this reformation that Jesus made for us, and that Judah Maccabee prefigured. Judas did the reformation.

The rededication of the temple was done by hands, by cleansing, purifying and building. However,

“Jesus entered through a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, not of this creation, not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood. He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption”.

Jesus built his Church shedding his own blood for it. He built it, making us perfect in conscience. He freed us from the regulation of the Old testament.

God himself came to us sending his only Son, Jesus Christ, who is not John the Baptist (who came to call for repentance), nor Elijah (who came to fight the priests of Baal), nor Jeremiah (who was a weeping prophet). Jesus is God.

No one can reveal this truth to us other than the heavenly father. Not even a priest. The truth that Jesus is “the Messiah the Son of the living God”.

So, we should stop blaming the priest if we are not close to the Lord. “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father.”

Once you believe in this truth, even the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. You become strong, like Judas and his brothers. The Maccabees who revolted against the Seleucid Greek empire, rejecting the Hellenistic influence on their Jewish lives.

Yes, a small group defeated an empire in some way. This is an example of how the gates of hell will not prevail against you.

In the Church, you are not by yourself, you have brothers and sisters.

We are family, and our strength comes from a living God. We are redeemed. This redemption was given by Jesus to each one of us for eternity. Our strength should exceed all the strength of the figures from the old testament: Jeremiah, Elijah, John the Baptist...

We receive a key that others don't have when we declare the name of Jesus.

Jesus himself said to Peter: “I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven.” Heaven will be on earth and earth on heaven. This is the new explanation. “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

How wonderful is it to have the keys of heaven in our human hands?

To be able to open heavenly doors with earthly hands. This is the meaning of what we celebrate today:

Remembering who our Leader is, remembering that we are brothers and sisters, and remembering what our mission should be.

Happy new liturgical year to our Church and to each one of us.

Rev. Father Rami Razzouk