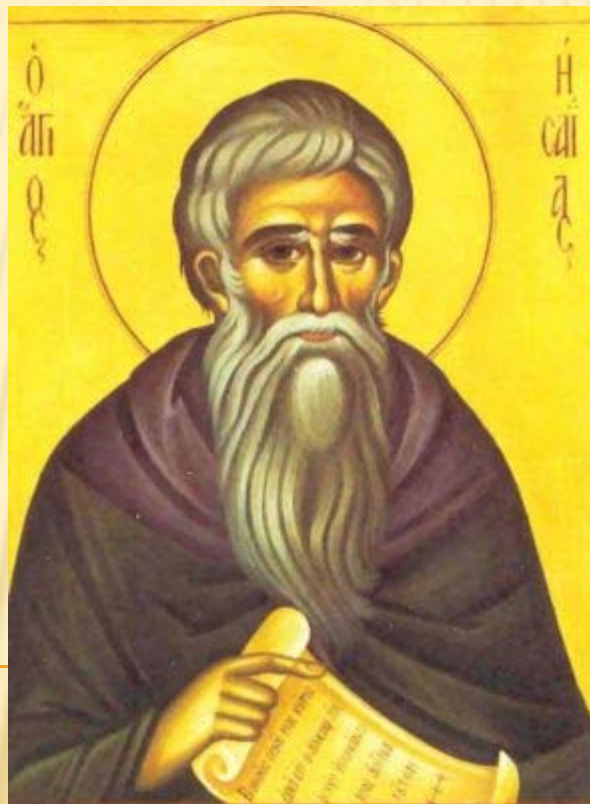


ABBA ISAIAH OF EL ESKEET IN THE HEART OF THE DESERT



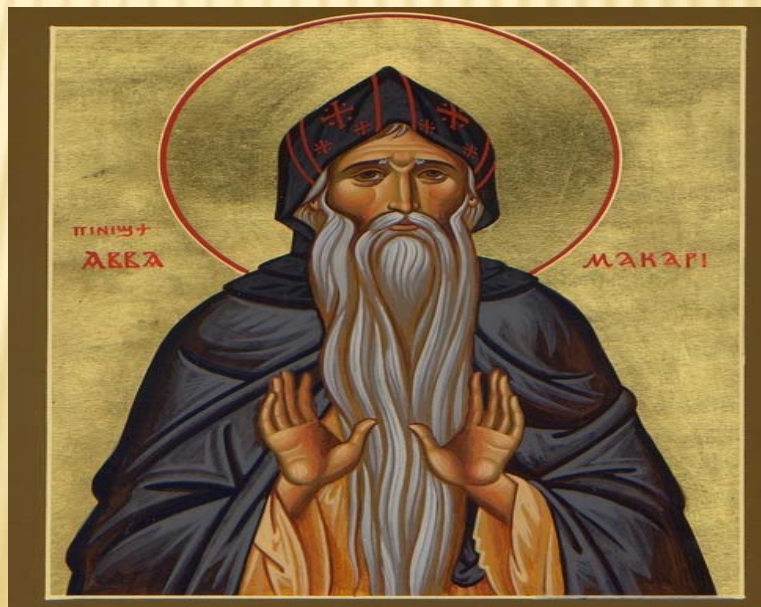
Servants Meeting 3/5/17

OUTLINE

- ✕ His Birth and Monasticism
- ✕ The Era of Abba Isaiah of El Eskeet
 - + Politically
 - + Religiously
 - + Spiritually
- ✕ Writings/Teachings
- ✕ Sayings
- ✕ What can we learn from the life of Abba Isaiah?

BIRTH AND MONASTICISM

- ✘ Born around 337 A.D. Brought up in the fear of God...
- ✘ He decided to enter the desert and journeyed to the wilderness of El Eskeet in 355 A.D.
- ✘ Became a disciple to St. Macarius the Great



BIRTH AND MONASTICISM CONT.

- ✘ Abba Macarius delegated Abba Isaiah to be the spiritual father to many novices...
- ✘ He was trained in the life of strict asceticism, devoutness and order..
- ✘ It was said that he once told his monks, **“If anyone wishes to abide with us, he must abide by the traditions of the fathers, which were passed down to us by them. Do not ask me to be lenient with you, for this will not be constructive for your salvation. If there be anyone who is not willing to abide by these rules, then let him depart in peace.”**

BIRTH AND MONASTICISM CONT.

- ✘ Following the first barbaric invasion in El Eskeet, in the year 407 AD, Abba Isaiah, together with some of his monks, journeyed to Syria/Gaza area, where he established monasticism there...
- ✘ He dwelt there within his cell for forty years, without ever departing from it.
- ✘ Abba Isaiah of El Eskeet reposed in the Lord in the year 447 AD. He was 110 years old.
- ✘ The Coptic Orthodox Church celebrates his feast day on the 11th day of the blessed month of Abib.

THE ERA OF ABBA ISAIAH

- ✕ The era in which Abba Isaiah lived is acknowledged as being a golden age..
- ✕ **Politically:**
 - + Following a period of intense persecution, the church was finally in a period of peace, due to the decree issued in the year 313 AD, by the righteous King Constantine, acknowledging Christianity.
 - + It was during this time that monasticism increased and flourished.



THE ERA OF ABBA ISAIAH...

✦ Religiously:

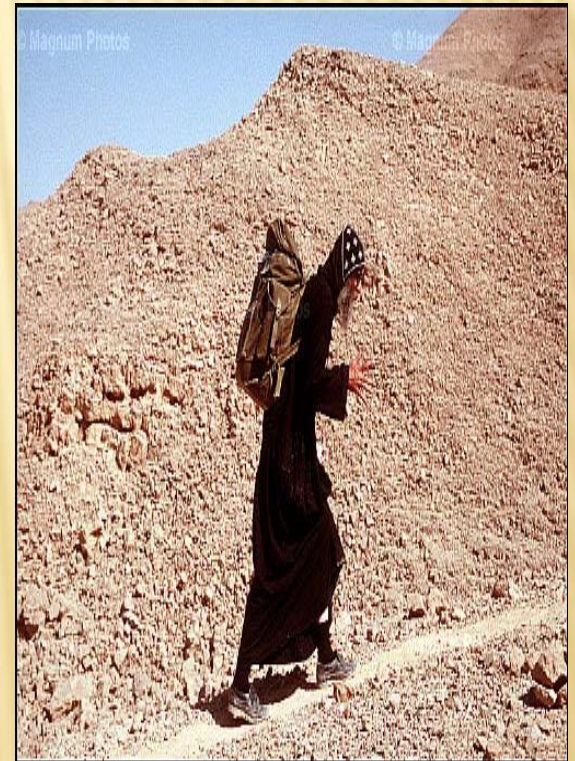
- + Abba Isaiah was a contemporary to some of the great pillars of the Orthodox faith, such as St. Athanasius the Apostolic, who was the 20th Pope of Alexandria, St. Timothy of Alexandria the 22nd Pope, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Cyril I, who was the 24th Pope and granted the title 'the Pillar of the Faith', others.



THE ERA OF ABBA ISAIAH..

✦ Spiritually:

- + Monasticism thrived and flourished greatly during the 4th and 5th centuries in Egypt.
- + Abba Isaiah was a contemporary saint to many great hermit fathers who had preceded him, such as:
 - ✦ Abba Anthony the Great (250 – 356 AD)
 - ✦ Abba Macarius the Great (300 - 390 A.D)
 - ✦ Abba Shenouda the Archmandrite (333 – 451 AD)
 - ✦ Abba Bishoy, the beloved of our good Savior Jesus Christ (320 – 417 AD)
 - ✦ Abba Moses the Black



WRITINGS AND TEACHINGS

- ✘ Very eloquent writer who engaged the use of metaphors and similes, in order to produce precision in his expressions and meanings....
 - + When speaking about **LOVE**, he said: ***“Love is the image of the True King. A soul cannot enter into the peace and rest of the Son of God, unless it has the image of the King.”***
 - + When speaking about **preoccupation with worldly concerns**, he said: ***“Just as a bird that cannot fly with one wing if the other is caught in a trap, likewise, one’s soul cannot grow in the love of God if it is trapped in worldly affairs.”***
- ✘ Abba Isaiah wrote many articles relating to monasticism, and due to the fact that his teachings were all Biblically rooted, his writings were a source of deep inspiration and knowledge and therefore widely spread and read by monks throughout all Eastern Christian countries.

Some of the subjects

WRITINGS AND TEACHINGS

- ✘ Eventually, the western countries also came to know him through his sayings, which were mentioned in Benoit D'Aniane's book entitled, **'The Laws of Attitude'**.
- ✘ In 1558, his writings were then translated into Latin and read amongst the Venetian monks, and then finally, they were translated into French in 1970 by the Bel Montagne monks, and entitled, **'Asceticism D'Isaiah', that is, 'The Asceticism of Isaiah'**.

WRITINGS CONT...

✕ The Ascetic Discourses

- + Written in the fifth century, during one of the most formative periods of Christian monasticism in Egypt and Palestine.
- + The Ascetic Discourses show a strong influence of the Scriptures, both Old and New, and of Early monastic writers.
- + They are marked by a faithfulness to tradition, yet equally by a note of originality distinctive to the Gaza region.
- + Abba Isaiah sets forth a practical guide for monks, ever aware of the challenges that interpersonal relationships present within monastic communities.

THE ASCETIC DISCOURSES

- ✦ 29 discourses ranging from different subject matters, such as self-denial, humility, and combating pride, but **mainly focused on the disciplined life of monks..**
- ✦ Practical guide for monks and novices



ABBA ISAIAH SAYINGS

On Alertness:

- × “I think of myself as a bird whose feet are tied to a string held by a boy. If the boy let the bird go, the bird starts flying thinking it is free, but once the boy pulls the string, it falls again to the ground. What I want to say is that we should be alert to the last breath of our life.”



SAYINGS CONT...

× On Prayer

- × “If you pray in a spirit of contriteness and unworthiness, then God will accept your prayers, but if you think you are more spiritual than another person who may be sleeping or doing something other than praying, then all your prayers are in vain.”



SAYINGS CONT...

× On Humility

- × “A humble person does not say anything negative about a person, even if they are negligent, he does not have eyes to see the mistakes of others, or ears to hear things that hurt his soul. He does not think of anything other than his own faults. A humble person likes to live in peace with all people, for this is the Lord’s commandment.”



SAYINGS CONT...

× On Repentance

- × “We are all like patients in a hospital suffering various kinds of illnesses: one suffers from a broken bone, another from an ulcer, another from a wound in his hand, and so on. If while the wound is healing we do something to aggravate the wound, then the pain will occur again. Likewise with whoever is repenting, If he condemns others, then his repentance is in vain. In the hospital, each person is concerned with their own illness and recovery. In the same way we should only be concerned with our own repentance, and not be concerned about the sins of others.”



WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

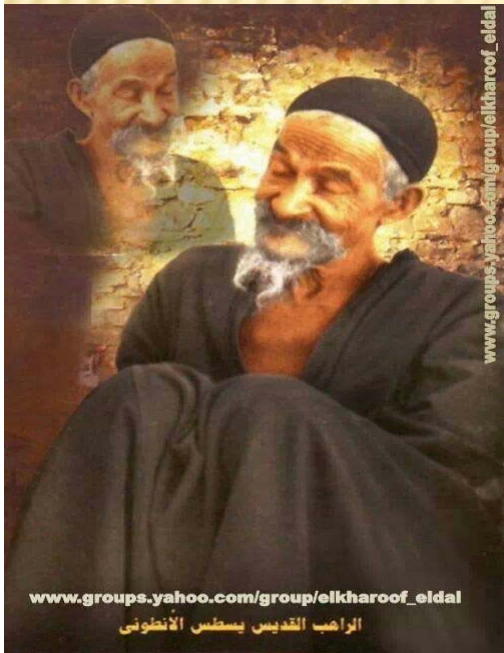
✗ A novice question??????



WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE LIFE OF ABBA ISAIAH?

✕ **Silence**: Necessity or Luxury???

- ✕ As the desert fathers teach us, **silence is a necessity...**
- ✕ Unfortunately, in our world today, it has become a luxury...
- ✕ One of the chief features of the desert itself is silence
- ✕ Noise is one of the distracting ways we avoid important issues like our spiritual life/God/others and even ourselves



SILENCE CONT....

- ✗ Silence now is an endangered species on the verge of extinction in many of our lives...
- ✗ Seize the opportunities to be silent...
 - ✗ Turn off the technology we run to so easily...
 - ✗ Be still to hear God's voice and message



LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF ABBA ISAIAH...

✕ **Talking Back...**

- ✕ As a form of prayer
- ✕ As weapons against certain temptations, use words from Scripture like stones to throw against those thoughts
- ✕ Jesus when tempted by Satan on the mountain
- ✕ David vs. Goliath
- ✕ Ex: Thoughts of Sadness....You aim the words from Psalm 42 in your prayers..
 - ★ **"Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."**

TALKING BACK CONT...

- ✗ A famous form of talking back/prayer...
- ✗ The **JESUS PRAYER...**
 - ✗ "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."
- ✗ The fathers teach us to aim the name of Jesus at the enemy.... An Arrow Prayer



RECAP...

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