

# *The Fiery Heart*

## **Some key verses:**

*(Psalm 104:4) "Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire."*

*(Philippians 2:6-9) "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name."*

*(Hebrews 12:28-29) "Therefore since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire."*

## **Focus**

The fiery minister-but more importantly is the fiery believer. It is essential for all children, elders, laymen to have a fiery heart and practicing fiery believers.

## **God as a consuming fire**

God wants His agents and all those who serve Him to appear as fire. Their hearts must be inflamed with love to become an icon of God himself.

The logos must be considered. God the Logos in the key verse from Philippians, a divine fire, humbled Himself to become like a slave and practice humility in our world.

*(Luke 12:49) "Came to send fire on the earth."*

How can we distinguish between humility and a fiery heart?

God who is fire, heavenly fire, consuming fire, accepted to be a baby, dependant on others and even to be judged by men and crucified. At the same time He was in fact the fiery one and wants every human being to be an icon of Himself. He willingly became like men so that we humans can become fiery heavenly beings. It is God the Fathers' pleasure to see us all as icons of Christ.

## **True practice of Christianity**

Christianity is not a canon or a law of morals but a personal contact with the trinity. It is to be united with the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit.

As St Athanasius said "God became man that men may also become Gods". In another letter he wrote, "He was the Son of God by nature-we are the children of God by adoption."

We imagine that a priest means naturally to be very humble, caring not for the world and its responsibilities. If we look to how Jesus lived in the world, He asked us to imitate Him in His humility but at same time had His own sense of responsibility to mankind. His heart was

inflamed with love, wanting every single person to enjoy His love. Every person, every child, baby, lady, man has His own place in the heart of Jesus.

To practice humility does not mean to be out of this world with no care for others. Instead each one must have a heart that is wide open...so that even those who persecute the church, foreigners, friends, enemies, those who believe or do not...all find a special place in our heart.

As St John Chrysostom wrote, "He came to change men into angels and to change the earth into heaven, so that not only can we say that the church is an icon of heaven but we hope all the world may become an icon of heaven" with all mankind being fiery beings, full of love like angels.

## **THE HISTORY OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE**

### **Abraham**

At the time when God chose Abraham, it was Abraham alone in the whole world who worshipped God. Perhaps Sarah his wife also shared his faith, but even his family was far from God.

All of mankind turned their back on God. Only Abraham faced God and craved for Him to be the Father of all believers. Abraham (and with him all believers) entered a covenant with God.

In the book of Genesis 15:17, God asked Abraham to offer a sacrifice (animal or bird) divided in two parts, after which there was a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between the two pieces. It was as if God passed through the pieces and there was smoke and fire, as if God means to say "I am fire, I love all mankind, I want to pass and dwell among my people, that her daughters were extremely good and polite girls and she was confused as to what the problem could possibly be. The principal said that the problem was that every one they came in contact with loved them, the teachers and students. Any time they noticed a person doing any wrong they brought a picture of the crucified Christ and asked, "How can you lie, fight or do any wrong while the Lord Jesus Christ saved you and redeemed you?"

The mother knew that at home they would say to their parents "Why are you doing this when the Lord was crucified on your behalf?"

The principal was concerned that it was a government school and several little kids went home and asked their parents to believe in the crucified Lord Jesus Christ and the principal found it was the work of her two small girls who taught the other children to witness to Jesus Christ, revealing the redeeming work of Christ to the Muslim children.

Their hearts were set aflame with love, till they could not stop themselves from witnessing for Christ, wanting every child to share their joyful experience.

We sometimes think we need special classes, courses or seminars about how to evangelize, but what is needed is for every member of the church to enjoy their fiery God and through this experience they can witness for Him without the church imposing this on them.

## **Saul**

Saul was very zealous and thought he was the most righteous man next to his teacher Gamaliel. He worked hard to abolish Christianity and devoted all his time and energies to work for his religion.

He discovered suddenly that he was on the wrong track when he saw the light from heaven and found he was in darkness...but following this the brightness of Christ began to be reflected in him.

He found that instead of serving, he was fighting His God. He was totally transformed after this and became a chosen vessel to witness wherever he went. If he was among Jews or gentiles, in a ship or on a sea shore, in a temple or among a Christian congregation, with any family, at any house, in any jail...nothing involved his heart more than the desire to reveal how he enjoyed his fiery God. He was desperate for all to enjoy the Christian fiery life.

through the sacrifice so that all people may become fiery beings, full of joy and of love.”

This first covenant between God and man was by fire.

## **Moses**

The 1<sup>st</sup> leader of the people was Moses. He tried to defend his people and redeem them from the oppression of Pharaoh and in line with this he killed the Egyptian who oppressed the Hebrew slave. But he escaped because of his fear of Pharaoh. He failed in his mission to defend his people and his heart in the following forty years turned very cold towards his people.

After forty years, God called Moses to return to free His people but Moses refused, claiming that he couldn't speak fluently. He tried to avoid God's call and asked Him to send another more suitable. God insisted that the Exodus would happen through his work. God not only said that He would give him the words to speak, but that He Himself would be on his tongue, within his mouth, in his heart and it would be inflamed with love to be a vessel for God's work in a way that his ministry would be sure to be very successful.

He beheld God in the fiery bush and heard God speaking to him. He removed his shoes and discovered the Logos would come to the world through the fiery bush which symbolises St Mary. The bush is also a symbol of the incarnation of the Logos and at the same time the body of Jesus Christ, the church, would receive the fiery Jesus and be transformed to appear as the heavenly congregation, full of fire.

Moses saw in this fire how God worked with him and how the divine fire inflames our heart to work. This work is not only the responsibility of the servants and clergy but every believer must imitate Moses and accept the Logos to live with them and within them for our hearts to be inflamed with love.

## **Two young Evangelists**

Once a lady asked me to visit her concerning a problem she had with regard to her daughters involving the Principal of their preschool.

When she was called in to see the principal, she expressed to the principal

## **Hope in His promises**

But how can I be a fiery person full of light when I am a sinner fighting with carnal, bodily lusts and desires and am confused with bad thoughts...with a heart too narrow to love those who hate me? How can I witness to Christ in this state?

A verse full of promise and hope from Zechariah 2:5, God said, "I will be a wall of fire all around her, I will be the glory in her midst"

The promise of God to every one of us is that He is your fiery wall, He is your glory within your heart. Why be afraid of sin? Why focus your eyes on your sins? Why do you say "I am a sinner, I am very weak"? Why don't we direct our eyes, our heart, our emotions, our senses to God and see His sweetness and strength. St Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me". You are not alone.

## **The Rich Father**

I remember a poor man came to Father Pishoy Kamel and said he was very upset. He had heard two people speaking on the tram, they were comparing wealthy, influential relatives who could help them financially. The man was saddened as his family was very poor and could not help him. He felt resentful towards God and said "Why God did you create me in a very poor family?"

Father Pishoy smiled and asked him "Did you tell them who your father is?"

The man said, "He is very poor like me".

Abouna said, "How could that be? God is your Father, the angels and archangels are your relatives, and your home is in heaven. Why didn't you say to them, 'Oh my Father is in heaven and in my heart, He strengthens me and is the fiery wall that surrounds me so that nothing can pass through Him into my heart, even the fiery attacks of satan'"

How can lust overcome me when I am surrounded with the Divine fiery wall? Nothing can pass through to my heart and mind.

How can I live in purity practically?

Don't be afraid-even while you are fighting it is for your victory, for your crowning, If you feel you are extremely weak, then lift your heart to God and say "You are my wall, You can surround my heart and mind, You can

We also are in desperate need to discover that Christianity is not just some dogma or doctrine to believe in, or some morals to guide our behavior or a specific way to worship God.

## **Angels of God**

These are all aspects of Christianity but the true core and essence of Christian life is to enjoy the personal contact with the Holy trinity in the church. When you enjoy having Jesus in your heart, and are guided by the Holy Spirit, you will naturally become like an angel of God. Nothing

should prevent us from preaching about our Christ.

## **God as Father**

Once a Muslim convert was asked why he converted. He said that he had never imagined that he could look to God as Father but used to perceive God as fearful and isolated from him in heaven in his own heavenly atmosphere who couldn't feel or share in his weakness. He felt he was a weak human with his own emotions and God being far and detached from all that, creating a gap between them. He found that he could enjoy Christianity by the phrase "Our Father". He said, "God is my own, He is my Father"

How many times do we say the phrase "Our Father" and feel a fraction of this mans joy?

## **God as The Light**

I remember at the time of Gamal Abdel Naser, how the city of Alexandria experienced many blackouts. Often the people would walk in the street carrying candles and as I was walking such one night, I met a man and said, "Alexandria is all in darkness", but he smiled and said, "Abouna I want to tell you that because you were born in light you can enjoy what I feel. I received the light of Christ and to me there is no darkness at all. I can't feel the darkness of Alexandria because the light of Christ is in my heart."

Do we feel the same way?

Sometimes we want to preach Christianity but first we must ask God to reveal Himself within our hearts, to enjoy His light and through this light we can shine and be the light of the world like Jesus. It's not our own light but His which dwells in our heart.

subsequently enjoy this gift. We can be like the cherubim who are fiery beings. They are the throne of God, the fiery vehicle. When we are in fellowship with the Lord, we too will become fiery vehicles and thus be like the cherubim.

## **God's eyes**

How can I become a fiery believer?

It seems easy for the priest, monk or pilgrim, but not for the young suffering with sin and lust.

We can be fiery believers when we look to the world as a gift from God, and we thank God for all His gifts and we begin to see Him in all that is in this world till we live in heaven. Heaven is not far from us. Truly it is in our hearts, it is also in this world. I see in the world the Lord Himself who created this world as my own palace.

St Gregory of Nyssa said "God created man after He created this whole world as a palace for the king and queen, Adam and Eve."

You also are a king/queen. You have the authority from the Lord Himself. Therefore when we look to the world through the eyes of the Lord Jesus, our hearts will be inflamed with love.

How did St Paul become a fiery apostle who changed many people and established many congregations across the world? He would say "I believe everything works for the good of those who love God".

He chose for me my home, my church, my workplace, even what I see as failures, God can change even these to be successes for me.

All is for my progress and thus in every moment I can enjoy the newness of life. Every morning a new life, a new day begins and thus I can never experience boredom. Every time I see my Lord seems like the first so that my heart is always inflamed with love.

## **Worshipping God without formality**

To enjoy the fiery heart we can't worship God in formalities. He wants you to be His own child. I can't imagine a child calling his father and saying, "Will you accept me home to sleep tonight or should I go to a hotel?"

This would insult the father who would say, "How can you ask that? If you are my son /daughter, how is it that you ask permission to enter your own home?"

sanctify all my senses...I am not afraid of sin because You are my friend, my refuge, You are everything to me."

## **Thanksgiving as a weapon of faith**

I was once speaking concerning thanksgiving and was asked by a man present, "How can I thank God while I commit a sin and I've been a slave of this sin for 10 years? It's too hard to thank God when I can't be free from this sin."

So I told him that when he practiced this sin to make a matanya and say "Thank you God for revealing and allowing me to discover my weakness. I am very weak, Can You change my life? Can You sanctify my senses, Can You work in my heart?" and that he would experience His strength.

A lady from Cairo wanted to visit me concerning her spiritual life. She said she had struggled with a specific sin for many years. She had heard a tape containing my advice for this man and each time she fell in this sin, she said, "Thank you God for You revealed my weakness; I believe You can work in my heart". She felt a new strength and was set free from this sin and had come to ask for another spiritual exercise.

We are not weak, because we are not alone. We have to believe that we receive His Body and Blood and are true members of His Body. If we've received the Holy Spirit in baptism and chrismation, then why are we afraid of sin? We have to be fiery beings regardless of all our weaknesses.

## **Elijah the fiery believer**

Having a heart full of fire will make us protected by fiery chariots and heavenly hosts. Elijah's disciple, when the king of Syria's whole army surrounded the mountain they were on, said: "What can only two of us do without any arms?"

Elijah told him not to worry and prayed that God would open his eyes. When Elishah then looked to heaven, he saw fiery chariots descending from heaven and surrounding the mountain. Why should we fear? We should not worry or fear the devil, or sins, or men, or anything in this world as in Him we become fiery beings that are supported by God.

Elijah had a fiery heart and at his departure a special fiery chariot came to receive his soul. Therefore we must have the same fire as this prophet to

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My Lord Jesus Christ is my own home and my heart is His own home. He is my Father, I am His child. There are no formalities. It is true that there is a church order but through this I practice my worship, not in formalities but with a fiery heart.

In the Eucharist I am in heaven, in fellowship with the saints of the old and new testaments and with the heavenly hosts. In my own room truly I am in front of the throne of God, I speak to Him as a child to his father.

David the prophet used to feel that he was like a baby on the chest of his mother in the arms of God. I can't imagine that a baby stops to ask if he can have this place, his mother's chest. It is a mothers' pleasure that he embraces her because he is her child.

Are you a child of God? If yes then why do you worship in formalities?

Even the Agbia must be prayed in a fiery manner. With matanias, I lift my heart to heaven and ask Him to open and to illuminate my inner man so that I may enjoy the angelic worship.

## **His special love for me**

To enjoy the fiery heart, we must know how precious we are to Jesus. We are children of God, we are members of His body and we have a special place in His heart.

Not we but I. Although I am united with all the believers from the old and new testaments and those until the ends of the age, I personally have a special place and He knows me by name.

St Augustine used to say to God "Is there any other person in the world besides You and me? I can't imagine there are any others. You love me and I love You"

May the Lord grant us all to enjoy fiery worship and a fiery life. Glory be to God forever, Amen.