

THE GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESS

References:

El-Keraza,

Notes For Servants:

- 1.
- 2.

Objectives:

General:

Specific:

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- 3.
- 4.

Instructions:

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Bible Verse:

“Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.”

(Mark 16:6)

Lesson:

THE GREAT CLOUD OF WITNESS

If we look around us in the Church, we find icons hanging on the walls, giving us the sensation that at the very moment of worship we are in relation with a multitude of saints in the kingdom of God. If

we raise our eyes we see the domes of the Church like the sky studded with stars and hosts of angels and saints. The Church intended this from us, that we may feel that heavens getting very close to us, with all its angels of light. That through prayer heaven is close at hand, while the great distance between the earthly and the heavenly disappears. This divine fellowship indeed carries us from the finite world of matter, to the unseen world of the Spirit where angels and saints abide.

VISIONS AND REVELATIONS

- Remember Jacob's dream: He dreamt there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending on it, and God stood above it, and said, "I am with you and will keep you wherever you go." And Jacob woke up and said; "Surely.. the Lord is in the place, and I did not know it, this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven". He called the name of that place Bethel "that is. the Lord's house", and built an altar there. After years later, on his way to Bethel, Jacob met the heavenly visitor who wrestled with him until the break of day and Jacob would not let him go until he blessed him.
- Among the heavenly scenes is that scene, beheld by Daniel which he describes saying, "As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames its wheels were burning fire." (Dan. 7 9)
This is Daniel whom the angel called, "The Beloved", and to whom God revealed His spiritual kingdom and creations of light which cannot be numbered.
- John the author of the Revelation, the disciple "whom the Lord loved" tells us in his Book of Revelation about the heavenly sights he beheld, "Behold a great multitude which no man would number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice,..: and all the angels stood round the throne." (Rev. 7:9-11)

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

St. Paul tells us about those saints and helps us to feel their presence, in order to be able to cast down heavy burden of sin. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us," (Heb 12:1) He describes the church as he sees it in faith and spirit, "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." (Heb 12:18-24)

If we put aside during prayer all matters which occupy our minds, hindering our thinking from concentrating on God only, and if we can turn our senses completely to worship, then we shall surely

feel the presence of the host of saints with us, and will be able to communicate freely with them.

SYMBOLS AND THEIR MEANINGS

- Cherubim: the “one who knows”, it is a grade of the angels who minister to God and stand in His presence around His throne.
- Seraphim: means “burning like fire”, another grade of angels having each six wings who are all times praising God.
- Halleluiah: means ‘praise the Lord’.
- The raising of the incense: the prayers of the believers as they ascend to God with the prayers of saints and are acceptable in His sight. “And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.” (Rev 8:4)
- The candles burning before the icons of saints: is a symbol for reverence for these saints that we may remember them and follow in their footsteps on the same path which had enlightened the way many generations. The candle which is consumed in order to give light symbolic of the life of the believer who is prepared to sacrifice himself in the service of others.

Conclusion:

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