

Lesson No. (36)

St. Serapamon Abou Tarha

References:

Notes for Servants:

Objectives:

General: Serving the poor and the needy

Specific:

1. Acknowledge the biography of the saint
2. Learn the meaning of serving God
3. Exercise giving and see the result

Instructions:

1. Review last week's lesson.
2. Give a brief description about the church occasion(s) for the coming week.
- 3.
- 4.

Bible Verse:

“But He held his peace, and answered nothing.”

(Mark 14:61)

Lesson:

St. Serapamon Abou Tarha

Abba Serapamon used to go out at night in disguise, carrying food to give to the needy families. He used to cover his face so that nobody would recognize him. For this reason he was called the Veiled Bishop. Under the regime of the Turkish ruler Mohammed Ali, and the reign of Pope Butros Al-Gawly (Pope 109), there lived a holy bishop called Abba Serapamon.

At birth he was called Salib (Cross). He was born in one of the villages in the Nile Delta. His parents were devout Christians. When he was about eighteen, Salib moved to Cairo to earn his living. He lived a very poor life selling oil on a cart pulled by a donkey.

One day some evil women accused him of murdering a young man whom they had killed in the market. In the police station, he lifted up his heart to God and with tears in his eyes he asked for the help of Saint Mary. Then, he looked at the slain person and asked him to inform the judge about the killers. The dead man lifted his head and told the judge about the murderesses. Then Salib told the corpse to lie down again, and wait for the Day of Judgment. The judge was astonished and set Salib free.

In order not to be praised for this miracle, Salib left the court and went immediately to St. Anthony's monastery, where he was later ordained a monk. Then he was chosen as bishop of Menofiah by Pope Butros Al-Gawly, and his name was changed to Abba Serapamon. He lived a very simple life, not paying attention to the riches of the world. He learned how to suppress his desires and eat the minimum food once every three days. Once he was heard praying and saying to himself, "Is it true that you perform miracles now, Salib? Don't forget that you are a sinner and the worst man among sinners. How then can you heal the sick and cast away demons? This is the power of God in you! Indeed this is the power of God!"

When Mohammed Ali Pasha asked the Pope's help concerning his daughter Zahra Hanem who was possessed by evil spirits, he sent him Abba Serapamon. After the saint healed her, Mohammed Ah offered him a big sum of money but he refused to take it saying that God's gifts are free. When Mohammed Ah insisted, the bishop asked him to reinstate the Copts to their jobs in the civil service.

One night Abba Serapamon went out in the narrow alleys of old Cairo, carrying a heavy basket. A priest saw him and followed him to see what he was doing in that neighborhood. The bishop was very tired and the basket looked very heavy. He stopped at one of the doors, knocked once, and left the basket on the doorstep before the door was open. Then the priest went to talk to him but the bishop made him promise not to tell anybody.

During one of his pastoral visits to a Christian dignitary, the man's baby who was ten months old died. The mother brought her dead child, put him in the bishop's lap and said, "This is my only child. Why did God take him from me?" The bishop held the baby in his arms and said, "Don't be afraid, your child is well by God's grace. For this child will be blessed and will be the head of your family." Immediately the child began breathing. Youakim Mansour (that was his name) lived a long life until he retired in 1909, to fulfill the prophesy of Abba Serapamon.

Once a priest called Father Mansour, who had lost already three daughters one after the other shortly after their birth, came to see Abba Serapamon. The bishop asked him if he had any children so he told him that he had a baby girl. The bishop said that that girl was not very important. Shortly after, the girl died. The next year, the priest's wife gave birth to another girl. When the bishop saw the priest, he asked him if he had any children. The priest refused to answer. He said, "Last time, when I told you, my daughter died." The bishop was very sympathetic. He took the priest by the hand and went to the altar, looked up to heaven and said, "My Lord Jesus, give two sons to Father Mansour, and let them live." The priest's daughter lived and he had two more sons who lived to tell their story to everyone.

After a violent fight between a couple, the wife left the house and went to a brothel. Her husband went to complain to the bishop, who told him not to be quick in his judgment. Then Abba Serapamon disguised himself and met the woman in that place, where she confessed that she had not committed adultery yet. He told her to go and spend the night in the house of a pious priest. On the next day the husband went to see his wife in the priest's house. The husband calmed down and the bishop told him to be kind to his wife.

One day, while the bishop was praying the Liturgy of the Eucharist, he cried: "O Mother of

The Light, please, help!" Then he asked a person who was near him to go immediately to the well in the church's backyard. When the man went there, he found a child called Michael who had fallen in the well while he was playing. He threw a rope to the child, and pulled him out of the well. Everyone was astonished to see the child without a scratch, his clothes not even wet. The child told them that after he fell down in the well, he found a woman sitting on a throne, floating on the water. She held him very gently in her arms, until the rope was thrown to him.

Once a highway man met him while he was travelling. The thief lifted up his hand to strike the bishop with a metal rod. Abba Serapamon said to him, "You lifted up your arm against me, and now it will remain like that." The bishop continued on his trip, and when he returned, he saw that the thief was standing in the same place crying from the pain that was caused by having to lift up his arm all that time. Then the bishop said, "How great is your sin, Salib!" He turned to the thief and said, "May God bless you, my son." The thief was immediately released, and was able to bring his arm down. He followed Abba Serapamon all his life as a faithful servant.

Abbas Pasha, who ordered the termination of all magicians and astrologers, summoned Abba Serapamon. He mocked him saying, "Tell me, how did you heal Zahra Hanem?" The bishop looked in his eyes and replied, "By the power of God." The Pasha became very afraid, and started trembling. He said, "Aman Ya-Baba Aman" which translated "Peace, My Father, Peace

Abba Serapamon lived a long life until the reign of Pope Cyril IV. He was buried in the old patriarchate along with the other popes.

May the prayers and blessing of this great saint Abba Serapamon be with us. Amen.

Conclusion