

Saint Maron

Feast Day: February 9

Birth: Unknown

Death: 410 AD

St. Maroun also known as Saint Maron, was a 5th century Syriac Christian hermit monk who after his death was followed by a religious movement that became known as the Maronites. The Church that grew from this movement is the Maronite Church. St. Maroun was known for his missionary work, healing and miracles, and teachings of a monastic devotion to God.

Background

St. Maroun, born in the middle of the 4th century in Syria, was a priest who later became a hermit, retiring to a mountain of Taurus in the region of Cyrrhus, near Antioch. His holiness and miracles attracted many followers and drew attention throughout the empire. St. John Chrysostom sent him a letter around AD 405 expressing his great love and respect and asking St. Maron to pray for him.

The Maronite movement

Maroun is considered the Father of the spiritual and monastic movement now called the Maronite Catholic Church. This movement had a profound influence in Lebanon. St. Maroun spent all of his life on a mountain in Syria. It is believed that the place was called "Kefar-Nabo" on the mountain of Ol-Yambos, making it the cradle of the Maronite movement.

The Maronite movement reached Lebanon when St. Maroun's first disciple Abraham of Cyrrhus who was called the Apostle of Lebanon, realised that there were many non-Christians in Lebanon, so he set out to convert them to Christianity by introducing them to the way of St. Maroun. The followers of St. Maroun, both monks and laity, always remained faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church. St. Maroun's feast day is celebrated on February 9th.

Spirituality

Maroun's way was deeply monastic with emphasis on the spiritual and ascetic aspects of living, contrasted by the fact that the 'Khoury,' or, 'priest' of the Maronite rite can marry. For St. Maroun, all was connected to God and God was connected to all. He did not separate the physical and spiritual world and actually used the physical world to deepen his faith and spiritual experience with God.

St. Maroun embraced the quiet solitude of the mountain life. He lived his life in open air exposed to the forces of nature such as sun, rain, hail and snow. His extraordinary desire to come to know God's presence in all things allowed St. Maroun to transcend such forces and discover that intimate union with God. He was able to free himself from the physical world by his passion and fervor for prayer and enter into a mystical relationship of love with God.

Mission

St. Maroun was a mystic who started this new ascetic-spiritual method that attracted many people in Syria and Lebanon to become his disciples. Accompanying his deeply spiritual and ascetic life, he was a zealous missionary with a passion to spread the message of Christ by preaching it to all he met. He sought not only to cure the physical ailments that people suffered, but had a great quest for nurturing and healing the "lost souls" of both non-Christians and Christians of his time. This missionary work came to fruition when in the mountains of Syria, St. Maroun was able to convert a temple into a Christian Church. This was to be the beginning of the conversion to Christianity in Syria which would then influence and spread to Lebanon. After his death in the year 410, his spirit and teachings lived on through his disciples and today he lies in "brad" village to the north of Aleppo.