

## **ABA GEBRE KRISTOS | Abune Abdel Mesih**

### **Childhood**

At the end of the 19th century, in 1898 Aba Gebre Kristos, the Righteous hermit of our time was born from his father ናይዝጊ ብሂል ጻድቅ (Nayzgī Bihīl Tsadiq) and his mother ምልእቲ (Mil'ite) in Liban Eritrea. His family were well off farmers but that life didn't appeal to Aba Gebre Kristos. He was an obedient child, and like all children of Eritrea he was introduced to the church from the day he spoke, and apart from learning, he spent most of his time in droves.

Aba Gebre Kristos was known to have been an obedient child, he wouldn't leave the house without his parents' consent. It is known that he continued his spiritual education by visiting the Holy Trinity Monastery ኅዳም ገዕዳ ለምባ (Gedam Tsa'ida Imba Silasie) because it was impossible to commit to his spiritual life from the comfort of his home.

### **His Journey to Egypt**

According to the historical information found at the Monastery of the Holy Trinity, the monastery admin, Aba Athanasius, told Aba Gebre Kristos to go to the city during the Fast of the Assumption of St. Mary (Tsome Filseta). But Aba Gebre Kristos told him that He would not leave the monastery during the time of Suba'ie, this was to honor and show his utmost love of the Holy Virgin Mary. After he finished fasting, he headed to Aba Athnathius, saying: "You and I will not be buried in this place"

Later on Aba Athanasius would go on to become bishop and die in his diocese, while Aba Gebre Kristos made his way through the land of Sudan and to Al-beramus Monastery in Egypt. This was around 1935 during the reign of Pope John XIX 113th Patriarch of Alexandria and the See of St. Mark.

How he crossed the borders during the Egyptian-Israeli war and managed to reach the monastery of Alberamus was a stunning miracle of God that leaves people amazed to this day. But on reaching the monastery the Egyptian monks said to Aba Gebre Krstos: He can only visit and they can't accept him to stay as a monk.

Aba Gebre Krstos replied "This Monastery belongs to my mother, and I am worthy to dwell in it, not only to visit but also to dwell." This was another evidence of the unshakable love he had for St.Mary.

Aba Gebre Kristos always enjoyed a life of solitude. Some would say "monks must live with such Monks, for monastic life is a journey you walk with others." Aba Gebre Kristos would reply saying "my journey is Christ, and my provider is Christ," and he would later return to the life of a hermit away from the Monastery. So Aba Gebre Kristos requested to live in a cave outside the monastery all by himself, but his request was denied

multiple times. Finally Aba took matters into his own hands, and escaped by jumping over the barrier.

Due to the danger of the war, the area was not stable, for the safety of Aba Gebre Kristos the monks of the monastery reported to the Egyptian Patriarch'. But the Bishop saw the matter spiritually, and he gave him permission to live outside the monastery, saying "Habesha monks love to be alone and in solitude, his prayers will bring us blessings.

Aba Gebre Kristos taught the monastery a great deal of spiritual life not just by word of mouth but drawing water and performing all of the other monastic chores by himself. Because he led a life of prayer and of service to others, the big question in each of the monks' minds was, "What does he eat?" But he had one response: "I have food that Christ gives me." Motivated by his great spiritual life, there were students who learned from him, One of them was his Holiness Abune Shenouda III. His Holiness once said "we know all saints by history, but the one we've witnessed with our own eyes is Aba Gebre Kristos"

Aba greatly influenced Spiritual education in Egypt, with his motto being "I hold the word of God in my heart and my mouth," he memorized the entire book of Psalms. He is also responsible for the rejuvenation of the life of solitude and monastic life in Egypt. Coptic monks to this day have great admiration for the resilient monks of Eritrea.

Aba Gebre Kristos is known for his quietness, but when he spoke, his words were powerful and unforgettable. Some of his famous sayings are:

1. I like to be obscure, and I want to be known as a regular man.
2. My energy and my doctor is Christ.
3. The knowledge of God does not dwell in a man who loves physical lust.
4. A prayer that is not accompanied by the doing of a benevolent one is like a wingless eagle.
5. A farmer is satisfied with his hard earned harvest, but the loaves you have not earned will not give true satisfaction.

### **His Departure**

After the departure of the Blessed Patriarch, His Holiness Pope Cyril of Alexandria, one of Aba Gebre Kristos students, Abune Shenouda III sat in the See of St. Mark as the 117th Pope of Alexandria. At this time, Aba Gebre Kristos was dwelling in the cave of St. Mina, leaving the cave he headed to Syria... Because of his keen desire to visit holy sites As Aba Gebre Kristos decided to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy City of Jerusalem, He went to Pope Shenouda and after a long discussion, Pope Shenouda convinced him to take a boat instead of by foot. From many witnesses, it is known that Aba Gebre Kristos reached Jerusalem in the 1970's. To this day it is not clear where and when exactly he

died, some at that time say he was martyred, but because of Aba Gebre Kristos' desire to be obscure and known as a regular man, the day or time of his departure was not written.