

Tamav Irene – A Contemporary Saint

Tamav Irene is a contemporary saint who lived 70 years (Feb 1936 – Oct 2006) and became well-known when she was ordained Abbess of the Convent of the Great Martyr St. Philopater Mercurius "Abu Sefein" for Nuns (Old Cairo, Egypt) on 15th October 1962.

As the head mother of the Convent, Tamav Irene applied the monastic rule of St. Pachomius (Father of Community) to the convent and it began to flourish. She insisted on the Pachomian Koinonia, the importance of living in a community: "While it is up to each nun to decide on the level of austerity appropriate for her, our life is still essentially built on partnership and love." She also emphasised the importance of leading a community in a democratic way. "I don't like to point to the sisters' faults and shortcomings. Words of love and encouragement are more effective."

Tamav Irene popularised the Great Martyr St. Philopater Mercurius amongst the Copts as he was once not well known as he is today. Tamav had a very close relationship with the saint and both accompanied each other in prayer and performing many miracles to glorify God's name.

A story from one of the nuns of Abu

Sefein Convent (Old Cairo, Egypt) about an incident with Tamav Irene:

"One day, one of my sisters, the nuns, asked me to do something for her. I felt that she was speaking to me in a harsh tone. I was upset and deep inside me I decided not to do it. When Tamav knew how I felt, she was touched and asked me, 'Mother, would you do what your sister wanted you to do?' I replied, 'I would do it only for your sake.' Tamav felt that I was still upset and affected by the way my sister spoke to me. My heart was not yet clear towards her, as I was unable to talk with her. At night, I was half awake when I saw Tamav standing by my bed. I heard her telling me, 'Mother, repeat after me: Holy God, forgive me and forgive her. Say it, Mother' And I repeated the words after her. Then she said 'Daughter, say: My God Jesus Christ, forgive me and forgive her.' Tamav kept saying these sentences and I kept repeating them after her until I was filled with peace and my heart was totally clean. Then I beheld Tamav fluttering with two big wings with which she flew high and then disappeared. When I woke up in the following morning and met my sister, I felt that I was able to talk with her as if nothing happened."

Tamav Irene had many virtues and was full of love, humility and simplicity. She departed from this world in peace on 31st October 2006. May her prayers and blessings be with us all. Amen.

By Jenny Mikhail

