

THE GIFT OF KNOWING ONE'S SINS: **MEDITATION FOR THE FEAST OF ST. MOSES THE BLACK**

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28 August 2015

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

One of the greatest gifts a man can possess — dare I say, the greatest gift, save Christ Himself — is to know one's own sins. It is a gift that comes *from* Christ and, in a beautifully ironic way, it is a gift that leads us *to* Christ. Yes, one of the greatest gifts a man can possess is to know his own sins.

And to *not* know our sins is to leave oneself exposed to the power of the evil one. Because sins, which are breaks in communion — with God, with others, and even with our very own selves — those sins create points of weakness in us wherein the evil one can try his best to have his way with us. But to know our sins, even if they are big and painful and cause us all sorts of shame; to know our sins, even when they are seemingly little and innocent and of no consequence to us (which, by the way, are sometimes the scarier ones — not the man or woman who commits adultery, though that is scary enough, but the man or woman who comes home every night with anger and resentment and bitterness and pride — those are the scary sins); but to know our sins is to be in the light, and to be in the light is to be in Christ, who is the Light of the world. And to be in Christ, Who is the Light of the world, that is what it means to be saved: to be re-created and made new and transfigured into the kind of person God created us to be — made in His holy Image and striving for His holy Likeness.

And that, I would suggest to you, is the most magnificent gift given to us by St. Moses the Black [*also known as 'the Ethiopian'*], the 4th century Saint from Egypt whom we commemorate on August 28th.

You all know the stories of his life, I'm sure. He was a slave, turned murderer, turned robber; turned monk, turned deacon, turned priest; turned martyr, turned Saint, turned patron of the Brotherhood of St. Moses the Black. But most importantly, I would suggest to you, he was a man who knew his own sins, even declaring on the day of his ordination, the day he was vested in white as a deacon, "God knows that I am still dark within."

And he was right. God knew that he was still dark within. But God also knew that he was, ever so slowly, being illumined with divine light. And as the darkness of his sins was being scattered, he was being transfigured into the one whose image we venerate today: St. Moses the Black.

And that, dear friends, makes all the difference in the world. Because like St. Moses the Black, God knows that we are still dark within. Big sins, little sins, frequent sins, once-in-a-lifetime sins, shaming sins, and self-righteous sins, St. Moses the Black kind of sins, or Subdeacon Joshua kind of sins -- it really doesn't matter. Yes, we are still dark within. But what matters more than our darkness, is that Christ doesn't want that darkness to be the final word on our lives, just as he wouldn't let it be the final word for St. Moses.

May that same Jesus Christ, Whose will it is that all be saved, may He hear the prayers of St. Moses on our behalf. And may St. Moses the Black, "brilliant sun shining down rays of hope upon a world eclipsed in darkness," as we hear in the Akathist hymn to him — may he pray for us, that, with him, we may be received into the Kingdom of God, which has no end.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

