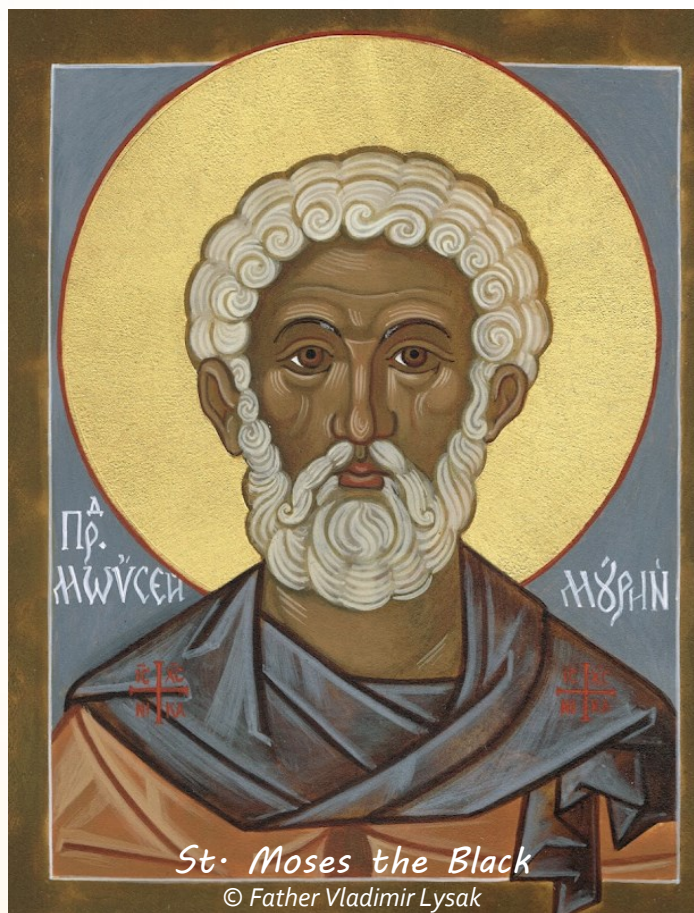


I SPY IN MY LITTLE ICON



By Kh. Jocelyn Abyad



This month's icon features St. Moses the Black, a 4th Century saint who lived in Egypt. His heritage was Ethiopian and his skin was very dark, hence the nickname St. Moses the Black. While he died a martyr and well respected Desert Father, his journey towards sainthood was a long and difficult one!

St. Moses was tall, muscular and wild in his youth. He towered over the people around him and his presence was intimidating. As a young man, he fell into a sinful lifestyle. He became the leader of a band of robbers, stealing from many people and even killing some of the people he robbed. This band of robbers worshiped a sun god and it is said that St. Moses used to pray, "O Sun!! If you are God, let me know it." But he would follow this prayer with, "And you O God whom I do not know, let me know you." After repeating these prayers

many times, God answered him! St. Moses heard a voice that told him "The monks of Wadi El-Natroun know the real God. Go to them and they will tell you." As soon as St. Moses heard this, he dropped his sword and ran to the desert dwelling monks and asked to be admitted into the monastery.

The monks were terrified and unsure of St. Moses' true intentions. But after many days of tears and pleading from the saint, he was accepted. St. Isidore the priest became his spiritual father and helped him to fight the many temptations of his past sinful life that still plagued him. St. Moses was very repentant of the life he had lived with the robbers and began to live a life of strict fasting and prayer. He withdrew into the desert even further from the monastery to live a solitary life.

Despite his aestheticism, St. Moses remained a physically powerful man. It is said that one day, four robbers came to his cell intending to do him harm. St. Moses overpowered and tied up all four men, but not wishing to harm them and fall back into his sinful ways, he carried them back to the monastery to his spiritual father and asked what to do with them. Seeing the former murderer and thief turned monk treat them with kindness, the four robbers were converted and joined St. Moses in the monastery.

Near the end of his life, St. Moses visited St. Macarius along with several other monks. At that time, St. Macarius prophesied that one of the men among them would soon be martyred. St. Moses responded that it would likely be him, because those who live by the sword often die by the sword as well. St. Moses was proven right not long after this conversation. His monastery was invaded and he was killed in the attack.

The monks of the monastery at Scetis buried St. Moses next to his spiritual father, St. Isidore and they remain there to this day. One of his most famous quotes is, "You fast, but Satan does not eat. You labor fervently, but Satan never sleeps. The only dimension with which you can outperform Satan is by acquiring humility, for Satan has no humility." May we all strive to attain humility and serve God as St. Moses did!