



Man was created from his infancy pure in the image of God. This was not a so-called accident of nature. This was a product of Divine creation. We can surmise from this that God gives unto all the possibility to live the life of purity particularly to the youth. The great potential of the power of youth is in its purity and chastity. A youth who gives in to the prisoner of his desires from an early age will also stand to fail in many other respects of his life as he matures to adulthood. The Holy Bible, Coptic Church history, and daily life experiences support this observation very well.

Young Samson of supernatural strength killed hundreds of Palestinians with his wisdom and fortitude. When Samson surrendered his desires to Delilah, one who did not worship God in spirit and truth, he was captured and degraded to the level of an animal. Young Joseph in his purity remained faithful to the Lord through jealousy, imprisonment, and living in a King's palace and he prospered throughout his life.

Young St. John, the Holy Gospel writer, enjoyed the love of the Lord Jesus Christ more than the others. Most probably this love was due to his youthful heart

and for his celibacy. He was so close to the Lord Jesus. We know that St. John leaned on the bosom of the Lord at the Last Supper, and that St. John dared to ask the Lord what no other one disciple present did, "*Lord, who is the one who betrays You?*" (John 21:20). Further we know that when the Lord Jesus Christ showed Himself again to a group of the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, following His Glorious Resurrection, no one present recognized Him except for St. John the celibate who said to St. Peter, "*It is the Lord!*" (John 21:7).

Many young adults enter the monastic way of life inspired by these actual accounts in the Holy Bible. Certainly they were studied and mediated upon by Saints Apollo and Abib of the fourth century, when they chose the monastic life.

St. Apollo was born in the City of Akhmim. His father and mother fervently longed to have a son. St. Apollo's parents were very righteous before the Lord, obedient, and were loving to strangers as well as the saintly. One night his mother had a comforting dream in which a shining man carrying a tree came into her home and planted it in the midst.

The tree bore fruit and the mother remembered the saying of the shining man, "Whosoever shall eat of this fruit shall live forever." When she awoke from

her comforting dream she shared the dream with her husband only to discover that he had had the same dream as well. They gave thanks to the Lord for such a dream, added to their works of righteousness and fasted with bread and salt for two days thereafter. In the not too distant future, this mother conceived a son and he was named "Apollo".

The young boy grew and advanced in righteousness, studying the subjects of Divinity. He began in his youth to long for the monastic way of life. This increased until he met a friend Abib and together they joined the monastic life entering into the monastery and becoming monks. They practiced many ascetic works and led a quiet life filled with only those things which were pleasing unto the Lord.

The blessed Saint Abib departed on the twenty-fifth of Paope.

Following his friend's, St. Abib's, earthly departure St. Apollo went to the Mountain Ablug where many followers gathered around him. He fervently taught them the fear of God and correctness of worship.

St. Apollo lived during the era of St. Macarius the Great, who acknowledged St. Apollo and his good works in writing. St. Macarius wrote a letter to St. Apollo to confirm him and the monastery in their good works with obedience to the Lord. St. Apollo

knew the time at which the letter was actually being drafted and said to his followers "Listen my brethren. Behold the great Abba Macarius is writing us a letter full of comforting and spiritual teachings." When the brethren arrived with the letter, their hearts were filled with consolation.

St. Apollo was one of the witnesses to the miracle of the holy woman that stood in the middle of fire and did not burn.

When the Lord was ready to receive St. Apollo and give him everlasting rest from his work on this earth, he also departed in peace.

Both saints' relics have been moved to the Monastery of the Holy Lady Virgin Baramus.

Ancient Inscriptions of Saints Anba Apollo and Anba Abib, on the wall of the St John Church

A church was originally built in their names. On its ruins, the Church of St. John the Baptist was built in the time of Moalem Ibrahim El Gohary and Pope Kyrillos the Fifth in 1884 AD. In this church there is an altar which bears their holy names.

The church celebrates the memorial of Anba Abib on the twenty-fifth of Paope and Anba Apollo on the fifth of Meshir.

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly nor stands in the path of sinners. Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in due season, whose leaf also shall not wither and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore, the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous. But the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalm 1).

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