

We just concluded the season of Lent, and now we are filled with Easter Joy. Yet this is only the beginning for us in many ways. You see, Pentecost is close at hand. That means we soon will become accountable to the Lord to go forth as saints in the making, renewed by the memorial of Easter, and that's why we were reintroduced to them.

To keep us together in times ahead, let us revisit a saint who has heard God's call and picked up the burden he was asked, just as we are now called to do. **Who is this Saint you ask...it's Elias.**

He is the prophet Elijah (Elias in Arabic), one of the prominent figures of the Old Testament. This part of the Holy Bible covers a long period of time. Historically, it extends over 200 years, from the patriarch Abraham to John the Baptist, who is the link between the Old and New Testaments. Elijah's story is recorded in the Bible. Christian Arabs call the prophet Elijah 'Mar Elias'. 'Mar' is an Aramaic word which means 'lord'. It is a title for their patriarchs. 'Mar' occurs at the end of the Book of Revelation and in the final verse of St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, 'Maranatha' i.e. 'O Lord, come!'. Elijah's mission was an important and difficult one. God entrusted him with the delicate task of reestablishing the worship of the true Creator, whereas the King, the Queen, and the people had abandoned it for the cult of Baal and Astarte (or Ashera), the god and goddess of fertility in Phoenicia. The cult of these two divinities was widely spread throughout the whole area which we now call the Near East.

Elijah offers us a rare example of faithfulness and loyalty to the Lord. He is the personification of courage in the accomplishment of duty. He resisted the tyranny of the vicious ruler Ahab and of his wicked wife Jezebel. He struggled against the whirling wind of idolatry and converted the misled people to the worship of the Lord. For all these reasons, Saint Elias, the prophet Elijah, is venerated not only in our church, but also throughout the Christian world, where many chapels, churches and monasteries are dedicated to his honor.

Isn't it time for us to review our history, lest we too fall into the same spiritual traps of our ancestors that are still out there? Now is the time to take a lesson from this saint. Put on the armor of God. That done...go to the armory and pick up your weaponry. It's time to start the battle.

Pray that the Holy Spirit descended like fire upon all who were involved in selecting a new Pope. That the chaff shall be burned away, and that a man of God who is Christ-like in all things comes forth from the fire to clear the threshing floor and set things right for a proper harvest.

Yours in Christ,
Deacon Hicks