

August 30

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Takla Haymanot (d. 1313) monk

Today the Ethiopian church remembers the monk Takla Haymanot, who founded the monastery of Dabra Libanos.

Baptized Fesseha Seyon, he was born in the first half of the eighth century in Zorare, a newly evangelized region of Ethiopia. When he came of age, he married, but soon became a widower. He then began an itinerant ministry as a preacher of the Gospel.

The real turning point in his life came when he entered the monastery of Dabra Hayq in the north of the country. The monastery's abbot was another well-known Ethiopian monk, Iyasus Mo'a. Takla Haymanot began his monastic experience as a disciple of Iyasus Mo'a and of the abbot Yohanni, and in time he himself became the spiritual father of many monks.

He eventually returned to his native region and founded the monastery of Dabra Asbo, whose name was changed to Dabra Libanos around the middle of the fifteenth century. It became one of the most important spiritual centers in Ethiopia, both because many of its first monks were members of the new Salomonid dynasty, and because it founded many other monasteries. This explains why Takla Haymanot, whose name means "plant of faith" in Ethiopian, is considered the father of Ethiopia's largest monastic family.

He was above all an intensely prayerful person. In late iconography, he is often shown intent on prayer while balancing on one foot. The other foot, according to tradition, had withered and fallen off.

Takla spent the last years of his life in voluntary and almost total solitude. He died on the 24th day of the month of Nahase in the year 1313, which corresponds to our August 30.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Jn 10:1ff.; Rom 8:35f.; 1 Pet 5:1f.; Acts 20:28ff.; Mt 10:16ff.

John Bunyan (1628-1688) witness

In 1688 the preacher and writer John Bunyan died in London.

Born in Elstow, near Bedford, Bunyan learned his father's coppersmith trade. At the age of twenty-five he began to associate with Bedford's Baptist community and to preach the Gospel.

As he had not been authorized to preach, he was imprisoned, and because he refused to promise that he would no longer announce the Gospel, he remained in jail for more than twelve years. In his cell, where he had nothing to read except for the Bible and George Fox's Book of Martyrs, he wrote an ingenious spiritual autobiography and *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a work that made him known and loved throughout the English-speaking Reformed world.

Bunyan had a firm grasp on reality and owed to his Calvinist education, against which he had initially rebelled, one of the central tenets of his character: an ability to withstand life's concrete and sometimes harsh demands without seeking to escape into a separate spiritual realm. His upbringing had also instilled in him the courage to announce God's word, which he considered his one vocation.

By the time he was released from prison, he had become famous and was finally able to resume his itinerant ministry, which he carried out until the end of his life.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Ex 3:7-12; Heb 12:1-2; Lk 21:21.34-36

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

John Bunyan, spiritual writer

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (24 misra/nahasse):

Thomas (4th cent.), bishop of Maras (Coptic Church)

Abuna Takla Haymanot (Ethiopian Church)

LUTERANS:

Matthias Grünewald (d. 1528), painter in Alsace

MARONITES:

Melanie the Younger (d. 439), nun

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Alexandre (d. 337), *John* (d. 577) and *Paul the Younger* (d. 784), patriarchs of Constantinople