

Egyptian Christian Shares Personal Perspective of Pain and Victory

Egypt is still fighting for survival, sailing through a windy, dark, endless night, and no dawn seems to approach while waves severely hit her ship from every direction.

This is the picture I see as I zoom out from the ongoing challenges developing on the ground.

Imagine you ride a helicopter, flying over the skies of Egypt today on an observation trip. Apart from the sand-loaded winds that characterize the season, you will be struck by the view of so many scattered protests popping up incidentally and simultaneously, like popcorn on a hot pan, at different locations and for various reasons.

The view of these protests shows crowds of angry, desperate Egyptians lacking the most essential needs of life, such as a small bottle of cooking gas. Nowadays Egyptians are lining up for bread and diesel, experiencing frequent water and electricity cuts and still, even today, suffering from lack of security. Police forces appear to focus their efforts more on guarding anything—any persons and any places—related to the ruling party of the Muslim Brotherhood, but they're not really doing much to secure or protect others.

We hear frequent reports about car hijackings, armed robberies, kidnapping for ransom, buildings set on fire and protestors blocking rail lines and major highways. I stand back in pain, and I wonder: *Is this really my country ... Egypt? Have we ever had so many critical problems and challenges packed together at one time?*

What makes the situation even gloomier and sad are the recent

attacks on churches and Christians at Khusus village, followed by an attack on the mourners of Khusus, who were carrying the remains of their dead ones and were on their way out of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Cairo on April 7. This was an unprecedented attack on the See of the pope of Alexandria, the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Cairo, by mobs, with the police arriving far too late and doing very little, if anything at all, to prevent them.

The attacks resulted in not only seven deaths and many injuries, but also hatred between the two sides, with little space for reason and rationality.

Where do we take our pains, and to whom shall we cry out our sighs? It is only the name of the Lord that we can call on; it is His faithfulness and might that we trust.

Is God still in control, and is there a reason why He allows these repeated attacks to come on His children? We may not have an answer to such a puzzling question now, and we may never have one. Yet what is clearly evident is that He is preparing His children in Egypt for a big victory and a grand harvest.

There are two incidents that affirm this fact.

The first one is a historical meeting that took place on Feb. 18. That was the day leaders of the different church denominations came together and launched "The Council of Egyptian Churches" in a true endeavor, sponsored by Pope Tawadros II (the pope of the majority Christians in Egypt), in a movement toward close cooperation, coordination and, most important of all, bridging the gap that was (and is) frequently used by certain state agencies and hidden organizations to plant mistrust and distort the relationship between the different Christian denominations in Egypt.

This date will certainly be highlighted as a turning point in our long church history that dates back to the church in the

book of Acts.

The second movement of the Spirit took place exactly 40 days later. One evangelical church hosted a three-day prayer meeting at a large conference facility in the desert north of Cairo. Invitations were extended to Orthodox and Catholic churches to join and unite in prayer and intercession for God to save Egypt from people and systems with wicked agendas, to bring about the unity of the church and to make Himself known to all Egyptians.

Around 7,000 people attended the gathering, which ran from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Pastors and priests representing all denominations were present and were given the opportunity to share and motivate Christians to pray and seek the Lord's face over our country. Hundreds of thousands—and maybe millions—followed the entire conference on satellite and on the Internet.

On March 29, during the morning session, a unique practice was performed on the stage and watched by all attendees and viewers. All leaders in the meeting, representing the different Egyptian churches, were called to the stage to perform a symbolic act of love and humility by washing each other's feet. There were about 10 of these leaders. The foot-washing practice is not new. What was new was the deep spirit of love, humility and sincerity they extended by asking forgiveness of one another. This was overwhelmingly genuine and extremely touching.

The conversation these leaders had among themselves as they gathered around each other on the stage could be heard slightly—as background noise—at the scene. The discussion was about everyone's desire to wait for his feet to be washed at the very end and to wash the feet of everybody else first! What a beautiful conversation this was. The scene was very genuine, and the essence of the original foot-washing act performed by the Master with His 12 disciples filled the air.

I could not hold my tears.

The powerful presence of the Holy Spirit could not be mistaken, and some people at the very end of the small stadium, where the conference meetings took place, saw white pigeons flying overhead. Could this be a special sign of affirmation of His presence? Maybe. Stories of healing from sicknesses were shared. The Holy Spirit was certainly there. Did Jesus not say in Matthew 18:20, "Where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (NIV)?

There are two undeniable facts we face today. One is that we, the Christians of Egypt, are walking through a long, dark tunnel that does not appear to have an end. It may even take us to a dead end with no way out. This is when our only hope remains in the Lord and when we have no options but to get together, stand before Him in unity and cry out His name. But the other glorious fact is that God is definitely preparing His church and bringing His children together for a great harvest and many fruits. We see many people crossing from darkness into the light of Jesus, and a lot more are on the way.

"Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others" (Matt. 5:15-16).

I want my light to stay shining so people can see the way to Jesus.

(This article was written by a Christian leader in Egypt. His name is not used due to security concerns.)