

15 April: Holy Light
Saturday: Grace Al-Zoughbi
Arteen

“O Sacred Head, Now Wounded”
words by Bryn and Sally Haworth Vs. 1

O sacred Head, now wounded,
with grief and shame weighed
down, now scornfully surrounded
with thorns, thine only crown: how
pale thou art with anguish, with
sore abuse and scorn! How does
that visage languish which once
was bright as morn!

Psalm 31:9-16

*Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am
in distress; my eyes grow weak
with sorrow, my soul and body with
grief. My life is consumed by
anguish and my years by groaning;
my strength fails because of my
affliction, and my bones grow
weak. Because of all my
enemies, I am the utter
contempt of my neighbors and an
object of dread to my closest
friends— those who see me on the
street flee from me. I am
forgotten as though I were dead; I
have become like broken*

*pottery. For I hear many
whispering, “Terror on every side!”
They conspire against me and plot
to take my life. But I trust in
you, LORD; I say, “You are my
God.” My times are in your
hands; deliver me from the hands
of my enemies, from those who
pursue me. **Let your face shine on
your servant; save me in your
unfailing love.***

It is Saturday afternoon. Crowds
are waiting, eyes are anticipating,
hearts are eager to receive the light
or “the Holy Fire” as it has been
traditionally called. We are in a
place none other than the Holy
Sepulcher Church in Jerusalem.
You can barely find space for one’s
feet to step in. In fact, people seem
to be on top of one another, priests,
clergy men, believers, locals,
pilgrims, tourists and anyone else
you can think of. This is no small
event: the light is soon going to
emerge from the tomb of Jesus.

Traditionally, this is what is thought
to happen every year; a miracle
takes place, Holy fire comes forth

from the tomb in remembrance of
the resurrection of Jesus. Many
people hold strong opinions about
this happening; they firmly believe
in their heart of hearts that a
miracle occurs every year and the
light and fire come out of nowhere
as divine proof and reminder that
the Lord is risen. Others are more
skeptical and allege it is just due to
a mischievous human hand!



Now, nothing is impossible for God.
God who said, “Let there be light,”
where there was only darkness at
the very beginning, is the same
God who “gives life to the dead and
calls into being things that were
not,” (Romans 4: 17) can still speak
anything into existence, even a fire
out of the tomb. However, this
debate is not the point. The point is,
whether we have truly experienced
this Light in our lives.

What happens to this Holy Fire after it escapes from the tomb and the Holy Sepulcher church? Well, the light is then carried to Bethlehem and other neighboring towns. Christians emerge from their homes to “receive the light”; with scouts, parades, colorful balloons, people in fancy dress, and there is singing and dancing everywhere. It is a festive atmosphere of joy. Yet, watching these people, I wonder: “Why are they happy? Do they realize what this light signifies?” Do we, as Palestinian Christians in this region, really know what it means to experience and witness the light of the risen Lord in our lives?

Then I think about Saul of Tarsus. He truly experienced the transforming Light of Christ on the way to Damascus. The result was a completely changed life, vision and mission. Paul turned from a persecutor of the Nazarenes, to a Jesus- hero: an apostle to the nations. Anyone who has seen, experienced, and watched the Light should not settle for less!

This Saturday that proceeds Easter Sunday, is known as “*Sabt Innour*—the Saturday of Light.” In a place

where darkness seems determined to penetrate, the Light of Christ is the only thing that can shatter any darkness: “The people walking in darkness have seen a Great Light, on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” (Isaiah 9:2) Jesus said we are “the Light of the world!”



How are we reflecting the Light of Christ in our lives? Are there still dark areas where we have not allowed the Light to shine? It is easy to experience the euphoria of an event and forget the essence of what we ought to be. Instead, let us examine ourselves, not only through this period of Easter but every day, so that we may be true carriers of the Light God wants to shine into each person’s life.

I grew up listening to and singing, “Shine Jesus shine, fill this land with the Father’s glory, Blaze Spirit blaze, set our hearts on fire.”

Let us pray, Lord, we ask you for your light to fill our hearts beginning in Jerusalem to Bethlehem and around the world today! We lift up the land that first witnessed the light and pray it will truly “blaze” for your Glory. With the psalmist we add our voice, Lord, “let your face shine on your servants, save us in your unending love.” Amen.

Devotion written by Grace al Zoughbi teacher at Bethlehem Bible College.

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