Biography of Ephraim of Syria

Ephraim of Syria **- (ca. 306-373), Syrian biblican exegete and ecclesiastical writer**

Saint Ephraim was born to wealthy parents in Nisibis (Mesopotamia) at the beginning of the fourth century and brought up in the fear of the Lord. Because of his youthfulness, he was of the opinion that everything happens by chance, but the following unpleasant happening convinced him he was wrong. Once, the young Ephraim was accused of stealing sheep, for which the judge sent him to jail even though he was completely innocent. Finding himself in the dungeon and lamenting over what’s happened, Ephraim once saw in a dream how he was being punished for other sins that he truly committed. After a certain period, the judge found out about his innocence and released him. Ephraim realized that peoples’ lives were not directed by blind chance, but by Lord God. After this, Ephraim abandoned the world and withdrew into the mountains with the recluses, where he became a disciple of Saint James of Nisibis. Under his guidance, Ephraim changed and became meek, penitent and committed to God.

James became a bishop and made Ephraim his assistant. Later, Saint Ephraim went to Edessa and withdrew into the mountains. Here he committed himself to a strict routine of monastic ordeals and zealously studied the Word of God. God endowed Saint Ephraim with the gift of teaching and he became renowned for his inspirational sermons. He labored intensely in expounding the Holy Scripture and enunciating Orthodox teachings. At the close of his life, he visited the great Holy Fathers of the Nitria desert (in Egypt) as well as Caesarea in Cappadocia, where he met Saint Basil the Great. Upon returning to Edessa, he fell ill and peacefully died in the year 373.