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The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

The Second Sunday of Zemene Sibket (ብርሃን - Light)

*The Church focuses on the **proclamations** and **prophecies** about the coming of the Messiah.)*

Liturgical Readings:

Romans 13:11–end; 1 John 1:1– end; Acts 26:12–19

Psalm 43:3-4

John 1:1–19

The Anaphora of Athanasios

The True Light: “I Believe”

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1). These opening words of the Gospel of John illuminate for us the profound mystery of our faith: Christ, the Eternal Word, the True Light, who shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness comprehends Him not (John 1:5). Today, beloved, we reflect upon this True Light, the One who calls to us even amidst the shadows of our earthly sojourn, and we declare with resolute hearts: “I believe.”

From the very dawn of salvation history, God has been calling humanity to Himself. The psalmist cries out, “Send forth Your light and Your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your dwelling” (Psalm 43:3-4). Here we see the yearning of the human heart for illumination, for guidance, for life that transcends the fleeting shadows of the temporal world. Long before the Word was made flesh, the Prophets of Israel bore witness to this light. Isaiah spoke of the Servant, the One sent as a covenant for the nations, “I will give You as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). Even in the Old Testament, the anticipation of the True Light was palpable; Israel looked for the day when God’s salvation would not only visit His people but shine upon all creation.

Yet the coming of the Light was not without opposition. The darkness, as John records, did not comprehend Him (John 1:5). This echoes the struggles we see throughout salvation history: false prophets, those who mislead for their own gain, as Peter warns, “there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies... bringing swift destruction upon themselves” (2 Peter 2:1-3). Indeed, the Light enters a world often unwilling to receive it. Even in Christ’s earthly ministry, many could not recognize Him, and yet those who did, who opened their hearts in faith, became children of God (John 1:12).

The Light comes, and He illumines not only the path before us but also the darkness within us. Jesus declares, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life” (John 8:12). In this statement, the Eternal Word invites each of us to step from the shadows of ignorance and sin into His radiant presence. How do we respond? With faith. With confession. With the embrace of His truth. For even the Apostle John, in his epistle, reminds us, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled... that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, that you may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:1-3).

The Light is not a distant abstraction; it is tangible, it is present, and it is offered to all who believe.

The transforming power of the True Light extends to our vocation in this world. Saint Paul exhorts us, “You know what time it is, how it is now the hour for you to wake from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Romans 13:11-12). Faith in the Light demands action. It demands that we allow His illumination to penetrate our hearts, our families, and our communities, guiding us in righteousness, mercy, and truth. The Ethiopian Orthodox tradition, with its profound emphasis on the liturgical life, teaches that the Light of Christ is encountered not only in Scripture but in the sacraments, in prayer, in fasting, and in the devout reading of the Psalms, allowing the believer to walk continually in His presence.

Consider the example of Paul, who once persecuted the Church, blinded by the darkness of sin and error, until he encountered the Light on the road to Damascus: “I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice speaking to me, saying, ‘Why do you persecute Me?’” (Acts 26:13-14). Paul’s encounter is a profound testament to the power of the True Light to reveal, to convert, to call forth a life wholly given to God. In our own lives, we too are invited to see, to hear, and to respond: not merely with awe, but with transformation and mission.

Christ, the True Light, also reminds us of the gravity of faith and the responsibility it entails. In His dialogue with the Pharisees, He asserts, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. I speak what I have seen with My Father; you do what you have seen with your father” (John 8:39-40). Faith is not a passive acknowledgment; it is a living engagement, a commitment to walk in His ways, to reflect His light in a world that often prefers darkness.

Thus, as we reflect on John’s prologue, we see the full revelation of God’s redemptive plan. The Word, who was with God in the beginning, became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14), that we might behold His glory, full of grace and truth. The True Light has come, and it is for all who receive Him. Our response is a simple yet profound declaration: “I believe.” It is a response that echoes through the ages, from the Prophets, through the Apostles, and into our own hearts today.

Let us, therefore, be people of the Light. Let us cast aside the works of darkness, embrace the radiance of Christ, and proclaim with unwavering faith: “I believe in the True Light, which enlightens every man that comes into the world.” Let the Light shine in our lives, that we may be instruments of God’s salvation, and let our hearts rejoice in the fellowship we share with the Father and the Son, now and forevermore. Amen.