

Saint Ephrem -- مار افرام



St. Ephrem's Feast Day is celebrated on January 28.

Ephrem was born in Nisibis, early in the fourth century and died in 373. He was instructed in the Christian Faith by Saint James, the Bishop of Nisibis, and was baptized at the age of eighteen. To escape the cruel persecution that was then raging in Persia, most of the Christian population abandoned Nisibis. Ephrem also left and settled first at Beit-Garbaya, then at Amid, and finally at Edessa where he spent the remaining ten years of his life.

Ephrem was a hermit, well known for his severe asceticism. Nevertheless, he took an interest in all matters that closely concerned the population of Edessa. Several ancient writers say that he was a deacon; as such he could well have been authorized to preach in public. Apart from some poems composed at Nisibis, the rest of his writings, poetic sermons, Scriptural commentaries, and hymns, date from his time at Edessa. It is not improbable that he is one of the chief founders of the theological "School of the Persians", so called because its first students and original masters were Persian Christian refugees.

Ephrem is called: the "Sun of the Syrians," the "Pillar of the Church", and the "Harp of the Holy Spirit". Theodoret of Cyrus praised his poetic genius and theological knowledge. His fame spread throughout the Syriac and Byzantine Churches and among all Christians. In 1920, Pope Benedict XV proclaimed him a Doctor of the Church.