

March 14

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Gabra Manfas Qeddus (XIV-XV cent.) monk

On the 15th day of the month of Maggabit, which corresponds to our 14th of March, Ethiopian Christians commemorate Abuna Gabra Manfas Qeddus, one of the Ethiopian church's most widely venerated anchorites. Reconstructing the biography of this monk, whose name means "servant of the Holy Spirit," is not a simple matter. According to Ethiopian *sinaxaria*, he was born in the Egyptian city of Nehisa, but soon left the city to become an anchorite in the region of Kabt.

Gabra Manfas Qeddus represents, in an emblematic way, the type of the hermit who separates himself from the world so as to make room for all of creation in his unceasing intercession. Represented in traditional iconography in the company of lions and panthers, and wearing nothing but his long hair, he probably lived from the late fourteenth to the early fifteenth century. He moved from one part of the Ethiopian plateau to another, and wherever he went, people came to him for spiritual counsel.

Tradition claims that when he died, the Lord bound himself by a pact to grant eternal life to all those who would entrust themselves to Gabra Manfas Qeddus' intercession.

A READING

Lord our God, you who search hearts and know every thought of human beings before it is formed, look upon us from your holy sanctuary.

Lord, you who forgive and are merciful, accord the fullness of your mercy to your servant, who has come to you because he has been called to this holy and pure vocation. May all his thoughts be directed towards you, so that he may take up your yoke, which is easy and leads to eternal life. He has fled all craving and every harmful desire, and has sought refuge in your mercy, so that you might renew him. Make him steadfast in combat and vigilant in the knowledge of mysteries, which one day will be fully revealed, so that he may be made worthy of rejoicing with unspeakable joy and of receiving the glory that will never fade in your kingdom.

Ethiopian liturgy, *Prayer for the monastic profession*

BIBLICAL READINGS

Rom 14:1ff.; 1 Pet 4:1ff.; Acts 17:19ff.; Mt 6:19ff.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Roderic and Salomon (d. 857), martyrs (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (5 baramhat/maggabit):

Sarapamon of Scete

(?), monk (Coptic Orthodox Church)

Gabra Manfas Qeddus, monk (Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:

Matilda (d. 968), queen, Henry I's wife

Frierich Gottlieb Klopstock (d. 1803), poet in Hamburg

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Benedict of Nursia (d. 547), monk