
Abune Petros

A Martyr of the Millenium

A Short life history of martyrbishop Abune Petros who became martyr on the 29th of July 1936, in Addis Ababa Ethiopia in the struggle against colonialism and oppression.

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Abune Petros was born in 1892 in a farmer family in the city of Fiche, which is situated north of Addis Ababa. He got the baptismal name Hailemariam that means power of Maria. As the custom of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) tradition he got a special bishop name, that is PETROS with the Ethiopian title for a bishop which is ABUNE. As a young boy Abune Petros was known as clever, helpful and humble disciple in the church and city of Fiche. He chose early to study the EOC diakon and priest education.

At the age of 24 he took the EOC oath and became a monk. He grew up and became a principled and well-known teacher around the monasteries in Fiche and Wolamo areas. In 1918 he was assigned by the EOC as the teacher and priest for the Debre-Menkrat monastery church in the region of Wolamo. Abune Petros continued to teach there when in 1924 he was assigned as the main teacher for the well-known island monastery-church of Mary, which is situated inside Lake Zewai in southern part of Ethiopia. He was well known for his teaching and preaching to the people around the region to seek first the kingdom of God: "To put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." (Colossians 3:12) His teachings and preaching were very popular and insightful to the people in the area and the disciples he teaches in the Monastery. In 1928 in connection with the nomination of Ethiopian bishops in the St. Marks Monastery in Alexandria, he was nominated to one of four bishops of Ethiopia, with the title and name ABUNE PETROS.

Abune Petros was nominated as bishop of the central and eastern part of Ethiopia. Half of his time he stayed in the City of Dessie and the surrounding monasteries, while the rest of his time he spent visiting and teaching in the monasteries around the Wereilu region. To help him in the administration of the churches and monasteries in the two regions, two priests were assigned to him one from each region. He continued to preach the gospel and teach in the churches. He was liked by many for his teachings and exhortation to stand-up for the belief, the truth and follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ: "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for His sake." (Philippians 1:29). As we read further we will see that Abune Petros exemplified this with his life.

