

## On Faith: St. Isaac the Syrian



*St. Isaac the Syrian, (c. AD 613- c.A.D. 700). Ordained Bishop of Nineveh. Great ascetic and teacher. illuminated monastic writer.*

### On Faith, c. AD 688

By faith we mean not that wherewith a man believes in the distinctions of the Divine and worshipful Hypostases, in the singular and unique nature of the very Godhead, and in the wondrous dispensation to mankind through the assumption of our nature, although this faith is also very lofty. But we call faith that light which by grace dawns in the soul and which fortifies the heart by the testimony of the mind, making it undoubting through the assurance of hope that is remote from all conceit. This faith manifests itself not by aural tradition, but with spiritual eyes it beholds the mysteries concealed in the soul, and the secret and divine riches that are hidden away from the eyes of the sons of the flesh, but are unveiled by the Spirit to those who abide at Christ's table through their study of His laws. Thus He said, "If ye keep My commandments, I will send you the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, and He shall teach you all

truths.” [John 14:15, 16, 17; 16:3] The Comforter shows a man the holy power that dwells within him at every moment, and the protection, the noetic force that shelters him always and drives away from him all harm, that it should not touch his soul or his body. The luminous and noetic intellect invisibly perceives this [holy power] with the eyes of faith, and the saints gain greater knowledge of it through experience.

This power is the Comforter Himself Who, in the strength of faith, consumes the parts of the soul, as it were by fire. The soul then rushes forward, despising every danger because of her trust in God, and on the wings of faith she soars aloft, taking leave of visible creation. She becomes as one drunken in the awestruck wonder of her continual solicitude for God; and by simple uncompounded vision, and by unseeing intuitions concerning the Divine nature, the intellect becomes accustomed to attend to rumination upon that nature’s hiddenness. For until the coming of that which is the perfection [or consummation] of the mysteries, and until we be found worthy of their manifest revelation, faith administers unspeakable mysteries between God and the saints. Of these may we be deemed worthy through the grace of Christ, here as an earnest, but there in the substance of truth in the Kingdom of the Heavens together with those who love Him. Amen.

[From: Homily 52: “On the Three Degrees of Knowledge...” in **The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian**, translated by Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, MA 1984, pp. 262-3.]