

Tells How and Why Prayer Rituals Are Strictly Observed in the Sudan

By Sister Christine

When I reflect on the Muslim observance of prayer in the Sudan, two very distinct incidents come to my mind. Both of them occurred during my first two weeks in the Sudan.

One afternoon while riding with a female colleague and her male relative, who was driving the car through the suk (market place), I saw a large group of men gathering together. My first thought was that there was trouble of some sort — but then, they looked too calm.

I next thought that perhaps the men were collecting for a meeting. They all stood in a row, with their backs towards me, then bent down. I called this to my friend's attention and asked her what was happening.

She and her relative laughed and explained that there was no trouble; that the men had gathered for prayer and that the prayer was said in the open. She told me that I would see men

pray anywhere during the times of prayer.

The other incident was this: early one morning, about 4 o'clock, I was awakened by the imam (the man who has a very good knowledge of the Holy Qur-an and is a spiritual leader of the Mosque) with his call to prayer. At that time I did not know what this commotion was all about.

I thought perhaps there was some emergency to make the imam sing so loudly. Now that I recall this incident, I really see how ignorant I was to the natural religion of the Original man. I thought perhaps some one had died, and knowing that the Muslims bury their dead quickly, I assumed this might be the emergency causing the Imam to call out so early in the morning.

I imagined how angry the people living in our area would be if they were all awakened by the imam. I was hoping at that time that the Imam would stop sing-

ing before he awakened everyone.

When I think how I reacted to this situation, I realize that my thoughts might be the thoughts of a so-called Negro ignorant to the true knowledge of self, and raised in this crude society of Christian North America.

I looked around me to see if the others still were asleep — and I did not see anyone in bed. I went back to sleep, thinking they must have been awakened by the imam and that they were either preparing for a funeral or fussing about being awakened.

They laughed heartily that morning when I asked them about the imam singing so early. They explained that a Muslim awakens before dawn, and gives his prayers and thanks to Allah before sunrise; that the imam was calling the people in our vicinity to come to prayer; that prayer was better than sleep. They said this call was

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to awaken those who were still asleep so they might come and prepare themselves for their God, before the dawn—so they will not be asleep when the day is, and thus be too late.

The dawn is the beginning light of the day, which makes us to see. If we keep our eyes open, the light increases in intensity as the sun rises, making things hidden to us the previous night visible—first with the dawn.

The Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that Allah came in the person of Master Fard Muhammad. I have heard the Messenger say that Fard means the dawn, the very early morning.

The people in the Islamic society of Sudan generally do not return to sleep after their morning prayers. They prepare themselves for the day.

As time passed, I noticed how very strict the Muslims in Sudan are in their observance of prayer.

At the university I saw the male students line up on straw mats and say their prayers in unison. I saw men get off the train when it stopped to say their prayers. I also have seen men get off their donkeys, perform their ablutions, take out their prayer rugs, turn to the East and pray.

The girls who lived at the dormitory observed their prayers five times a day. At times I mocked them. This was because of my ignorance. But they were patient and explained that if a person prays so often during the day, this would keep his mind on doing good, and keep him conscious of his duties.

The unity of brotherhood that one sees on observing the Sudanese in their observance of prayer is a beautiful sight. I also know now that it is a beautiful feeling to be in unity and pray in unison with the followers of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad when at his Mosques of Islam.