

## **RESOURCE SHEET 48**

### Activity 1

When he was still a baby, his parents had a prophetic dream: from the boy's tongue sprang a lush vine which produced abundant clusters of grapes. The more the birds ate the fruit, the more it multiplied. Later it was revealed that these clusters were his sermons, the leaves of the vine--his hymns.

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"One day my parents sent me outer town and I found a pregnant cow feeding along the road. I took up stones and began pelting the cow, driving it into the woods till

evening when it fell down dead? During the night wild beasts ate it. On my way back, I met the poor owner of the cow. 'My son,' he asked, 'did you drive away my cow?' I not only denied it, but heaped abuse and insult upon the poor man."

A few days later he was idling with some shepherds. When it grew too late to return home, he spent the night with them. That night some sheep were stolen and the boy was accused of being in league with the robbers. He was taken before the magistrate and cast into prison. In a dream an angel appeared to Ephraim and asked him why he was there. The boy began at once to declare that he was, innocent. "Yes," said the angel, "you are innocent of the crime imputed to you, but have you forgotten the poor man's cow?"

When Ephraim saw the tortures to which criminals were subjected, he became terrified. He turned to God and vowed that he would become a monk if God would spare him such a cruel ordeal. The magistrate, however, just laughed at the youth's tears and ordered that he be stretched on the rack.

But just then a servant came to announce that dinner was ready. "Very well," said the magistrate, "I will examine the boy another day." And he ordered him back to prison. Providentially, the next time the magistrate saw Ephraim, he thought he had been punished enough and dismissed him. Although he was spared the rack, Ephraim had learned his lesson and, like the Prophet David, he entreated the Lord to overlook his youthful folly. True to his vow, upon his release he went straightway to the hermits living in the mountains where he became a disciple of St. James (Jan. 12), who later became a great bishop of Nisibis. Born again in repentance, Ephraim began to train as an athlete of virtues, exorcizing himself in the study of the Holy Scriptures and in prayer and fasting. The passionate and wayward youth was transformed into a humble and contrite monk, weeping day and night for his sins and entirely surrendered to God. Ephraim's earnest resolve pleased the Lord Who rewarded him with the gifts of wisdom; grace flowed from his mouth like a sweet stream, in fulfillment of his parents' dream.

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