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THE RESURRECTION OF THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF NAIN

The divine nature of Christ and the resurrection of the dead

One Father of the Church, St. John Xifilinos (11th-c.), observes that the Lord with His commandments, teachings and miracles, setting out from the lower things proceeds towards the higher things, and as if He is ascending the steps of a ladder He leads the race of men little by little to the knowledge and understanding of His Godhead, as well as to other truths, among which the resurrection of the dead has the most central position. So, He teaches and gives Commandments not as a simple teacher, but as befits a God. Similarly He works miracles in a God-befitting manner. First He heals various illnesses of men, of body and soul, subsequently He performs the resurrection of dead people, a little before His passion He resurrects Lazarus, who had died four days before, and finally He resurrects His own self preannouncing the resurrection of all the dead.

The life bearing body of the Lord

In all this training of Jesus to us people is placed the resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain also. The Lord resurrected the youth touching him and saying to him: "Young man, I tell you, arise." In other words, young man, I'm speaking to you, resurrect.

He didn't settle only in speaking, but first He touched the dead man, in order to show as Saint Cyrill of Alexandria notes, that His body has life-making energy. His body is life-making, because He is the temple and habitation of the living Word and has all its energy. Just as iron which is united completely with fire, remaining iron, simultaneously also bears the qualities of fire, thus also the body of the Lord, being really a human body, bears within it the energy of God the Word, since in the person of the Lord Jesus the human and divine nature are always inseparably united.

By touching He resurrects the dead man. In the same way He cleansed the leper and He healed the hemorrhaging woman. All of them according to the Mosaic Law were impure and whoever would touch them would become impure. The Lord however precisely for this reason

touches them, in order to show that His body is godbearing and comprises a source of purity. Whoever comes into contact with it is cleansed, is healed and is sanctified.

Some people when it comes to divine communion fear or turn away from the holy spoon, in case it might impart some germ or illness to them. They are suffering from the lack of knowledge of God and end up in blasphemy towards the person of the Lord. The Lord Jesus does not accept defilement, nor can He ever possibly become a hearth of defilement. On the contrary, the more impure and sick a person is in soul and in body, when he piously and with faith approaches the immaculate mysteries, he is healed, sanctified and receives eternal life. The person who does not fear God however, no matter how well he is from a physical viewpoint, let him not approach, because the body of the Lord is fire “burning the unworthy ones”.

Elijah, Elisha and Christ

The Fathers of the Church in their homilies on this passage, usually compare it to the resurrections of the dead people who are mentioned in the Old Testament. Let's look at a very interesting thought which comes from St. Gregory Palamas.

The Saint recalls the Apostle Paul, who in his Epistle to the Hebrews praises the Saints of the Old Testament, among whom are numbered those women who with their faith were granted to receive back their sons who had died, resurrected. Specifically, he refers to the widow whose son the prophet Elijah resurrected and the pious Shunammite woman whose son the prophet Elisha resurrected. These two women were granted to receive their sons resurrected, because they were very faithful and pious, and because without losing courage they begged the prophets very much to help them. Despite the great faith and virtue of the women however, the two prophets were previously not able to resurrect their children, except only when they isolated themselves for a long time and prayed to God very much.

In the case however of Christ there is a huge difference. The Lord Jesus without delaying at all and without praying, being most certain from the beginning of the resurrection which would follow, commanded the widow mother to not cry, He stopped the procession from proceeding and with just one commanding word He immediately brought back the youth to life, proving in practice that He is the Lord of life and of death. Furthermore, He approached on his own to the miracle of the resurrection, not only in order to show His life-making power, but also that He has incomparable goodness and compassion.

We also, my beloved, are similar to this widow woman. Our soul separated from God, due to its sins, has its mind dead. It is necessary in this life, which comprises a journey to the tomb, for us to sense this reality, and like the widow mother, to mourn with repentance, so that the Comforter could take compassion on us, come towards us, stop our tears, resurrect our mind and grant us the true consolation and eternal life. Amen

Archim. P. K.