



61st Year

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THE MYSTERY OF SALVATION

In the worship life of the Church all we believers live the spiritual sense of the Resurrection of Christ as also the spiritual expectation of our own resurrection during His Second Coming. The apostle Paul witnesses this: "we know that God who resurrected the Lord Jesus, will also resurrect us and will present us before Him together with all of you" (2 Cor. 4:14). How do we know, how do we draw this divine knowledge which is the "mystery of theology" according to Basil the Great?

We draw from the invaluable witness of the Gospel, the preaching of the Apostles, the teaching of the Fathers, the dogma and the confession of faith, the life of the Church. It does not suffice, however for us to have only in mind this divinely inspired notification that, as Basil the Great again observes, "the mystery of theology from untortured faith seeks agreement"* in other words, agreement is demanded without doubt and distinctions of thoughts on our part about if and to what degree the notification of the mystery of faith is true. Otherwise, no matter how much we know in theory about faith in the resurrected Christ, without our own completely eager participation, we cannot reap this salvation thanks to the Resurrection, in our being.

We confess because we believe

When God accepted the repentance of the prophet David and delivered him from his great sins and his sad personal circumstances, the latter said "I believed, therefore I spoke" (Ps. 115:1). From the living saving intervention of God in his life, he saw, with the eyes of his soul, the divine righteousness and His rich mercy. And he believed, he hymned, he confessed and he taught that God is "compassionate and merciful" and "righteous in all His works".

We also, taking an example from the great prophet and psalmist of the Old Testament, follow the witness of the apostle Paul. If truly we believe in Christ, we are constantly deadening in our present life our old man with his passions and wicked desires in order to approach with our own crucifixion His own Crucifixion which deadened our own sins.

We strive for Christ to live in us with His resurrectional grace and for His divine energy to become manifest in our corrupt nature. For us to feel the corruption subsiding, and in its place incorruption spreading, which He granted with His lifebearing Resurrection. So that our expectation also in the general resurrection of the dead be certain. And then we are able, with the diligence of what we are saying, to confess the truth which we believe.

Knowledge without the experience of faith

Every word or even reference of ours to the content of faith, to the words of the Gospel and to preaching, which is not accompanied by our personal spiritual experience in the worship life of the Church is, as again Basil the Great notes, empty words because we are deprived “of what is strong from faith”. In other words, when we are speaking about Christ and His teaching and we do not certify all that we are saying with the strength of the faith of our soul, of our personal experience, then our words are empty of content. Because they do not exude the aroma of the experience of faith and consequently they don’t convince. On the contrary they are the offspring of vainglory and haughtiness rather than a word of faith for the salvation of souls.

The Pharisee of the parable also fell into this deception. “Becoming prideful in the vanity of his mind”, according to Basil the Great, in other words because he was swayed into haughtiness from the vain manner of thought of his mind, he fell into boasting about himself and criticizing the Publican. Because he had the knowledge of God without humility, without spiritual experience. He had knowledge “in order to be seen by men”. On the contrary, the sinful Publican who is being pointed at had the knowledge of God through his deep humility. He implemented, obviously without knowing, the words of David which are full of realization: “While I was severely humbled”. He confessed the mystery of the Theology of the Cross of Christ, because he was humbled in the depth of his simple conscience, following the traces of the Godman, who was humbled “unto death, the very death of the Cross”.

Common worship is a source of the Holy Spirit

In one such condition worthy of imitation we also ought to stir up the saving words of the Gospel of grace, in other words, to be in a deep realization of what we say and whatever we confess should have the analogous reflection of faith, so that we have boldness before God and men, just like the Publican, but also a communion of faith with the other members of the Church. Nevertheless, the communion of faith cannot exist without the communion of the Spirit. In other words, we should be imbued in our spiritual struggle by the same spirit of faith which distinguished all the saints and righteous ones of our Church. We should have “the same Spirit of Faith” (2 Cor. 4:13) which characterizes the body of the Church. In other words, it is necessary that we preserve the unity of faith through our common spiritual experience, so that our faith has power and so that our word is convincing.

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