



61st Year

September 8, 2013

Pamphlet #36 (3145)

THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS AS A GATE TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

What is that which prevents many people from truly believing? If it is ignorance then nothing prevents them from learning whatever they need for the truth of the faith of the Church. If it is deception, they can enter the light of Christian teaching to find what is correct and to believe in God. If it is sin which creates guilt, then there is the delivering power of repentance. If however for all these things human egotism is to blame, then in order to depart from these things humility is necessary. And the Cross of Christ leads to this.

The Cross crushes egotism

The Apostle Paul says that the Cross of Christ comprises for him the boast of his soul. "I do not want to boast in anything else except only the Cross of Christ." He had personal experience of what deception means, when he was persecuting the Church of Christ. He knew what haughtiness and egotism means when, as a genuine Pharisee he was distinguished for his fanaticism in the old religion more than all his other peers and the people of the same ideas, the Jews. (Gal. 1:13-14). Ignorance and egotism had blinded him so that he could not see the truth. However, after the shocking event of the revelation of Jesus to the Apostle, on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6), and his wondrous change, he came to know the truth through the mystery of the Cross.

His mind escaped from the ignorance and the deception of Judaism and he was enlightened by the light of divine knowledge. And his pharisaical boast was crushed before the revelation of the crucified and resurrected Jesus. And in this crushing he came to know the utter humility which Christ underwent on the Cross, but he also triumphed before sin and crushed death with his Resurrection. So for this reason also, the Apostle Paul boasts, he rejoices and is glad for the Cross of Christ. Because with the experience in the mystery of the Cross he passed from the impasses of deception and of egotism to the experience of blessed humility.

The Cross is humility

Every virtue is a Cross, especially however humility. Because man crucifies his actions and he aligns himself with the will of God, in other words, with His commandments. Before he was receiving commandments from the world of sin which directed him. Now however that the grace of Christ approached him, he receives commandments from the Church, which is Christ. So for this reason the Apostle says that "the world for me has been crucified", which means that the will of the world in him

had died. Neither did it influence him, nor sway him, nor direct him to actions which oppose God's will. He had been delivered from the attraction of pleasure, the passion of wealth and the fantasy of glory which bind man with the vanity of this world, with the world of sin.

Despite this he is not deprived of the joy of life. Because Christ lives in him (Gal. 2:20), who is the life of men. Through the humbling of his own will to the will of Christ another world opens its gates for man. He approaches the eternal, he feels the blessed, he communes with of the divine. He enjoys the peace and the rejoicing of divine grace, of spiritual pleasure, which cannot be compared to the pleasure of the world of sin. He lives in the wealth of the glory of God, which is inexhaustible and does not have a relationship with the mammon of avarice and of human vainglory. He lives the grace of divine goodness, he lives in the brilliance of the glory of God.

The humility of the Cross the experience of God

The experience of humility through the grace of the precious Cross of Christ does not take the world of sin out of us alone, but it also detaches us from it. The Apostle says characteristically "and I have been crucified to the world". After we taste the grace of the humility of the Crucified Jesus we are freed from the desire of the world. "We cast off from our mind and heart, the recollection and the desire of the world", writes Saint Gregory the Theologian.

The enlightenment of divine knowledge enters into our mind and the witness of the presence of God is constant in us. We are not searching the truth. The truth is in us, the Spirit of truth, the Comforter, and he fills us with divine meanings and sacred desires. Every doubt, every hesitation about the God who taught us the path of humility through the Cross leaves from within us. Christ who revealed His Father to us and sent us the All Holy Spirit, after His Resurrection, to guide us constantly and with precision "unto all the truth" of God, whom we believed and worship in his Church.

The meaning of the Cross in our age

Upon hearing the word "cross" people understand hardships and affliction. Whoever undergoes hardships and afflictions carries a cross. It is not easy, for whoever goes through trials, to hope with certainty that it is possible for joy to succeed them. Affliction puts down the endurance of the soul and darkens the mind. However afflictions and trials with the power of faith in the Cross of Christ are altered into joy. It is the power of the Cross upon which the Almighty One was crucified as a man and he altered the weakness of the crucifactory martyrdom into strength, triumph and salvation. Affliction in Christ always leads to joy, to victory and to spiritual glory.

Consequently, the cowardice which many times overwhelms man on account of afflictions, the crucifaction which whoever lives distresses and hitches experiences, can by the grace of the Precious Cross be altered into strengthening and courage, into power and rejoicing, into glory and spiritual rejoicing. So long as with humility we approach the mystery of the crucifactory sacrifice of the Godman and entrust Him to guide us "unto refreshment". Because the Crucified Christ is also the Resurrected Christ.

Archim. H. N.

The Birth of the Theotokos

The Church today celebrates the nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos. The All Holy Virgin Mary was a great gift of God to her parents Joachim and Anna, who did not have children. With her birth, the chastisement and shame of childlessness left from them. But the greatest gift of God is the birth of the Most Holy Theotokos to the world. It is the presaging of men's salvation. So for this reason, the Church chants: "Your nativity, O Theotokos, announced joy to all the universe..." The time which God had appointed to send salvation to the world was approaching. A few years later, the infant who was born today, will give birth to the cause of the gladness of men.

(From the publications of the Apostolic Ministry. "The Small Synxaristes")