

The Significance of the Resurrection

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His Holiness Pope Shenouda III

Pope of Alexandria & Patriarch of the See of St. Mark

-An excerpt from His Holiness' book Words of Spiritual Benefit.

Death is an alien and a stranger to humanity. When God created man, He formed him for life; He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being.

God wished him life and perpetuity, but man's choice was inclined towards sin. Man thus brought death upon himself as a result of his sin, "For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans6:23), and death came into the world and reigned over humanity.

We rejoice with the resurrection because it is a triumph over death and a return of man's nature to life. God has created man to live and not to die.

Christ's resurrection is the handsel of our resurrection, and thus, Saint Paul the apostle described Him as "...the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." (1Corinthians15:20) He is the first fruit and we will rise after him.

Perhaps someone may ask saying 'How can Christ be the first fruit of the dead while many rose before Him?' Examples of such people are:

The son of the widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon, who was raised from death by Elijah the prophet (1Kings17:22).

The son of the Shunammite, whom Elisha the prophet raised from death (2Kings4:32-36).

The three whom the Lord Christ Himself raised from death, and they are:

1. The son of the widow of the town called Nain,
2. Jairus' daughter, and
3. Lazarus.

In fact, there are some persons who rose from death before the days of Christ, but after their rising, they died once more. They are still waiting for the general resurrection. Christ's resurrection was the one after which there was no death. It was the first fruit and the inordinate desire which every believer longs for in eternity.

By 'the resurrection', we mean the way which leads to eternal life. We know that man's life on earth is very short. It is nothing if measured or compared to eternity, immortality is the beautiful dream of humanity.

The resurrection elevates the value of man and asserts that his life is not ended by death.

It affirms that there is another life which differs from this earthly one. We, God willing, will enjoy that new life after the resurrection.

Thus we say in the Creed which we recite every day in our prayers, 'we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the coming age, Amen. '

Therefore, we may say that the most important events of the resurrection are those which will follow it.

The resurrection shows that there is an extension to man's life in eternity. It proves that death is a mere stage of the

journey of man's life. It is a bridge between two lives: an earthly life and a heavenly one.

Undoubtedly, the heavenly life is far better than the earthly one because it will be in heaven, above any material standard. It will be pure and without any sin.

Moreover, it will be an association with God, His angels and His saints. The holy Bible says about heaven that it is what "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." (1Corinthians2:9)

Saint Isaac said 'Fear of death disturbs the heart of the ignorant, but the righteous person longs for death as he loves life.'

Thus, Saint Paul, the apostle said "I...desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” (Philippians1:23)

Death does indeed become an inordinate desire to those who love God and the life in heaven. They consider it far better than life on earth, which has lost its purity.

Those who believe in the resurrection do not consider death as an end of life, but as a transfer to another life.

The resurrection has changed people's outlook regarding death. It is a mere transition, or a bridge, which leads to another life. One can say that it is an operation of ascent. Thus, death has become the inordinate desire of the righteous.

The apprehension of death fell forever after Christ had trodden down death by His resurrection.

Saints do not fear death any longer. They pay no attention to its causes, such as: illness, conspiracies and the aggression of the wicked.

He who fears death is the sinner who has not turned from sin. He becomes afraid of his destiny and of the final day when he will stand before God.

The sinner who practices certain desires and passions fears death lest it should deprive him of such lusts, but the righteous person never fears death because he believes in the resurrection.

The resurrection is connected to faith. The apostates, for example, do not believe in the resurrection.

He who is of the faithful believes that God has the ability to raise the body from death. He who has created human-beings from dust and made dust from nothingness can bring the body back to life in order to return and unite it with the spirit.

The apostates do not believe in the spirit's existence or its perpetuity after death. They do not believe in eternity or in recompense and punishment, and thus I said that the resurrection is connected with faith.

Believing in the resurrection leads to the life of righteousness and virtue. The believer knows that on the awesome Day of Judgment, he will stand before God to give an account for all his past deeds, whether good or bad. Thus, this faith leads him to be cautious and accurate in his life for fear of the final judgment.

Consequently, he judges himself upon every deed, every thought, every sensation and every word, and then he reforms himself as Saint Macarius said 'My brother, restrain yourself before they check you. '

The true faith in the resurrection leads to the life of religious devotion and monasticism.

The resurrection drew men's attention to the glories of the other world; thus, the fleeting joys of this perishable world diminished. By their exorbitant thinking about the invisible, they paid no attention to the tangible and visible things.

They became as the Bible said, "... we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. "(2Corinthians4:18)

If it was not for the resurrection, men would have covered greedily in earthly life and plunged in its inordinate desires as the Epicurians used to say "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." (1Corinthians15:32)

Those who believe in the resurrection and prepare themselves for it control themselves and subdue their desires and passions. They prepare themselves spiritually to make themselves upright. They do not yield to bodily or material desires, but lead a spiritual life and suppress their bodies, their senses and their nerves.

The love for eternity made the righteous long for something greater and more eminent than the world.

Everything in the world cannot satisfy or fill them because, from within, there is a strong desire for heaven, and a great longing for the spiritual and happy life which exceeds sensation and intelligence; excels all earthly desires.

Thus, the saints looked at the earth as an expatriation and considered themselves strangers on it. They always long for a heavenly home; they longed for a different spiritual and heavenly life which no eye has seen. They longed for the other world which is adorned with holiness, innocence, spirituality, peace, love and purity. There, God fills the hearts and there is no place for any other desire.

In the resurrection, there is a kind of consolation and compensation for men.

He who does not find justice on earth feels that his rights are kept for him in heaven with the Lord, who judges in favor of the oppressed.

He who does not find the plentifulness on earth, as poor Lazarus, is consoled because he will find all the good in heaven. He who was tormented on earth will find consolation in heaven.

The resurrection makes an equilibrium in the life of every man. Justice makes a balance between all that man has on earth and what he will receive in heaven.

The resurrection offers a true consolation to all friends and lovers because it will gather them together once more after death separates them.

If life came to an end in the tomb without resurrection, our dear friends who had passed away would perish. Our relationship would be all over with them and we would never see them again. Undoubtedly, this case wears the heart and causes disaster to those who will lose their friends forever.

The resurrection gives us an idea of the power of God and His love for man. This powerful, loving God, who can raise the bodies after they have been decomposed and changed into dust, and who is able to bring them back to their first form in a kind of transfiguration -spirituality and luminosity -did not wish to enjoy the universe alone, but created other creatures.

He did not wish to be alone in eternity, so He bestowed perpetuity upon both men and angels and granted human beings an eternal life after rising from death. One of the things which will be enjoyed in the resurrection is the cessation of evil and all that sin has caused.

In paradise, where the righteous live, there is neither evil nor sin. Our sins will come to an end. We will lead the life of absolute plainness and complete purity and innocence. We will be like angels and children in their innocence. The soul will be rid of the blemish caused by sin, such as: fear, doubt, lust or anxiety. The soul will then be adorned with the crown of righteousness, and all defects, whether psychic or corporal, will vanish.

We shall be in need of much time as well as many books if we talk about all the glories of the resurrection.