

MONDAY OF THE BLIND MAN

May 25, 2020 • Thirty-seventh day of Paschaltide



CHRIST IS RISEN!

Canticle

It is worthy for the heavens to rejoice and the earth to be glad. The whole world, visible and invisible, celebrates: for Christ our everlasting joy is risen from the dead.

*Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down Death by death,
and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.*



AT MORNING PRAYER

from the Pentecostarion, at Orthros

The blind man, accounting his whole life to be night, cried unto Thee, O Lord: Open mine eyes, O my Saviour, Thou Son of David, that together with all men, I might also praise Thy power.

Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.

Woe is me! How am I become like unto the barren fig tree? And I fear the curse as well as the cutting. But, O heavenly Husbandman, O Christ God, show my barren soul to be fruitful, and receive me as the prodigal son, and have mercy on me.

Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.

With the Angels, the heavens, and with mankind, earthly things cry out to thee with a jubilant voice, O Theotokos: Rejoice, thou portal that art more spacious than the heavens; rejoice, only salvation of the earthborn; rejoice, O modest one, who art full of grace, who gavest birth to God incarnate.

AT EVENING PRAYER

from the Pentecostarion, at Vespers

O Christ God, Thou spiritual Sun of Righteousness, Who with Thine immaculate touch didst enlighten both the body and soul of him who from his mother's womb was deprived of sight, illuminate the eyes of our souls also, and show us to be sons of the day, that we might cry to Thee with faith: Great and ineffable is Thy compassion toward us, O Friend of man; glory be to Thee.

Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.

O Lord, though I am struck with the fear of Thee, I cease not from doing evil. What man under judgment feareth not the judge? Or who wishing to be healed doth provoke the physician to anger as I do? O long-suffering Lord, take pity on mine infirmity and have mercy on me.

Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.

Rejoice, O uncrossed gate; rejoice, O wall and protection of those who hasten unto thee; rejoice, O quiet haven, who hast not known wedlock, O thou who hast given birth in the flesh to thy Creator and God. Thou shalt continue to intercede for the sake of those who praise and worship thy birth-giving.

JUSTIN THE PHILOSOPHER

Martyr

†165

~ from his treatise on the resurrection of the body ~

THOSE WHO MAINTAIN wrong opinion say that there is no resurrection of the flesh, giving as their reason that it is impossible that what is corrupted and dissolved should be restored to the same as it had once been. And besides the impossibility, they say that the salvation of the flesh is disadvantageous; and they criticize the flesh, citing its infirmities and declaring that it is the cause of our sins, so that if the flesh, they say, rises again, our infirmities will also rise with it. And they elaborate such fallacious reasons as the following: 'If the flesh rises again, it must rise either in its entirety and possessed of all its parts, or imperfect. But its rising imperfect argues a lack of power on God's part, if some parts could be saved, and others not. If all the parts are saved, then the body will manifestly have all its members.' Furthermore, they suggest that it is absurd to say that these members will exist after the resurrection from the dead, since the Savior said, *They neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but shall be as the Angels in heaven? (Mark 12:25)* The Angels, they say, have neither flesh, nor do they eat. Therefore, they conclude there shall be no resurrection of the flesh.

By these and similar arguments, they attempt to distract men from the Faith. And there are some who maintain that even Jesus Himself appeared only spiritually, and not in flesh, presenting merely the appearance of flesh. These persons seek to rob the flesh of the promise. First, then, let us solve those things which seem to them to be insoluble; then we will introduce in an orderly manner the demonstration concerning the flesh, proving that it partakes of salvation.

These people say that if the body shall rise in its entirety and in possession of all its members, it necessarily follows that the functions of the body's members shall also be in existence: that the womb shall become pregnant, for example, and the rest of the members in like manner. Now, let their argument stand or fall by this one assertion of theirs. For, if this is proven to be false, then their whole objection will be removed. Now, it is indeed evident that the members which discharge functions, discharge those functions which in the present life we see, but it does not follow that they *necessarily* discharged the same functions in the beginning. And that this may be more clearly seen, let us consider this: For example, the function of the womb is to become pregnant. But, even though this member is designed to discharge such a function, it is not *necessary* that it does so, since we see many women who do not become pregnant, as those that are barren, even though they have wombs; so pregnancy is not the immediate and necessary consequence of having a womb. But those even who are not barren may abstain, some being virgins from the first, and others from a certain time. And we see men also keeping themselves virgins, some from the first, and some from a certain time. Our Lord Jesus Christ was born of a Virgin, that He might show to the ruler of this world that the formation of man was possible to God without human intervention. And when He had been born, and had submitted to the other conditions of the flesh—I mean food, drink, and clothing—He did not submit to procreation; for, regarding the desires of the flesh, He accepted some as necessary, while others, which were unnecessary, He did not submit to. For if the flesh were deprived of food, drink, and clothing, it would be destroyed; but if it is deprived of lawless desire, it suffers no harm. As He says, *The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. (Luke 20:34-35)* Let not, then, those that are unbelieving marvel, if in the world to come He does away with those acts of our fleshly members.

Well, they say, if then the flesh rises, it must rise the same as it falls; so that if it dies with one eye, it must rise one-eyed; if lame, lame; if defective in any part of the body, in this part the man must rise deficient. How truly blinded they are in the eyes of their hearts! For they have not seen on the earth blind men seeing again, and the lame walking by His word. All things which the Savior did, He did, in the first place, in order that what was spoken concerning Him in the prophets might be fulfilled: *the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the deaf shall hear; (Isaiah 35:5)* and secondly, to engender the belief that in the resurrection the flesh shall rise entirely. For, if on earth He healed the sicknesses of the flesh, and made the body whole, much more will He do this in the resurrection, so that the flesh shall rise perfect and entirely. In this manner, then, shall those dreaded difficulties of theirs be healed.

The proof of the possibility of the resurrection of the flesh I have sufficiently demonstrated, in answer to men of the world. And if the resurrection of the flesh is not found impossible on the principles even of unbelievers, how much more will it be found in accordance with the mind of believers! But following our order, we must now speak as regards

those who think evil of the flesh, and say that it is not worthy of the resurrection nor of the heavenly citizenship, because, first, its substance is earth and secondly, because it is full of all wickedness, so that it forces the soul to sin along with it. But these persons seem to be ignorant of the whole work of God, both of the genesis and formation of man at the first, and why the things in the world were made. For does not the Scripture say, *Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness? (Genesis 1:26)* What kind of man? Manifestly He means fleshly man, for the word says, *Then God formed man out of the dust from the ground. (Genesis 2:7)* It is evident, therefore, that man made in the image of God was of flesh. Is it not, then, absurd to say, that the flesh made by God in His own image is contemptible, and worth nothing? Thus, the fact that the flesh is a precious possession to God is manifest, first from its being formed by Him, and second, that its value can be gathered from God's creation of the rest of the world. That for which all the rest of creation is made, is the most precious of all to the Maker.

If God had no need of the flesh, why did He heal it? And what is most powerful of all, He raised the dead. Why? Was it not to show what the resurrection should be? How, then, did He raise the dead? Their souls or their bodies? Manifestly both. If the resurrection were only spiritual, it was requisite that He, in raising the dead, should show the body lying apart by itself, and the soul living apart by itself. But He did not do so; rather, He raised the body, confirming in it the promise of life. Why did He rise in the flesh in which He suffered, unless to show the resurrection of the flesh? And wishing to confirm this, when His disciples did not know whether to believe He had truly risen in the body, and were looking upon Him and doubting, He said to them, *You have not yet faith, see that it is I; (cf. Luke 24:25ff)* and He let them handle Him, and showed them the prints of the nails in His hands. And when they were by every kind of proof persuaded that it was Himself, and in the body, they asked Him to eat with them, that they might thus still more accurately ascertain that He had in truth risen bodily; and He did eat honey-comb and fish. And when He had thus shown them that there is truly a resurrection of the flesh, wishing to show them also that it is not impossible for flesh to ascend into heaven (since He had said that our dwelling-place is in heaven), *as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight, (Acts 1:9)* while He was in the flesh. If, therefore, after all that has been said, anyone demands demonstration of the resurrection, he is in no respect different from the Sadducees, since the resurrection of the flesh is the power of God, and, being above all reasoning, is established by faith, and seen in His works.

The resurrection is a resurrection of the flesh which has died. For the spirit does not die; the soul is in the body, and without a soul the body cannot live. The body, when the soul leaves it, is no longer alive. For the body is the house of the soul; and the soul the house of the spirit. These three, in all those who cherish a sincere hope and unquestioning faith in God, will be saved. Considering, therefore, even such arguments as are suited to this world, and finding that, even according to those detractors, it is not impossible that the flesh be regenerated, and seeing that, besides all these proofs, the Savior in the whole Gospel shows that there is salvation for the flesh, why do we any longer endure those unbelieving and dangerous arguments, and fail to see that we are moving backwards when we listen to such an argument as this: that the soul is immortal, but the body mortal, and incapable of being revived? For, this we used to hear from Pythagoras and Plato, even before we learned the truth. If, then, the Savior had said that there was salvation for the soul only, what new thing, beyond what we heard from Pythagoras and Plato and all their band, did He bring us? But now He has come proclaiming the glad tidings of a new and strange hope to men. For indeed it was a strange and new thing for God to promise that He would not keep incorruption in incorruption, but would make corruption incorruption. But because the prince of wickedness could in no other way corrupt the truth, he sent forth his apostles (evil men who introduced pestilent doctrines), choosing them from among those who crucified our Savior; and these men bore the name of the Savior, but did the works of the one that sent them. But if the flesh does not rise, why is it also guarded, and why do we not rather allow it to indulge its desires? Why do we not imitate physicians, who, it is said, when they get a patient that is despaired of and incurable, allow him to indulge his desires? For they know that he is dying. Those who hate the flesh surely do this, casting the body out of its inheritance, so far as they can; for on this account they also despise the body, because it is soon to become a corpse. But if our Physician, Christ God, having rescued us from our desires, regulates our flesh with His own wise and temperate rule, it is evident that He guards it from sins because it possesses a hope of salvation. *Amen.*



JOHN OF DAMASCUS

Presbyter & Monk

†c.776

[Note: On the six Sundays before Great Lent, I presented excerpts from St. John of Damascus' first and third Apologies in Defense of the Divine Images. I will be adding these six excerpts as second readings for the next few days, for those who did not have an opportunity to read them at that time—DDO]

~ *Excerpt 1 from the third Apology: Sacred images defined* ~

WHERE CAN YOU FIND in the Old Testament or in the Gospels explicit use of such terms as *Trinity*, or *consubstantial*, or *one nature of the Godhead*, or *three Persons*, or the *one substance of Christ*, or His *two natures*? Still, as they are contained in what Scripture does say and defined by the holy fathers, we receive them, and we anathematize those who do not. I have proven to you that under the Old Covenant God commanded images to be made: first the tabernacle, and then everything in it.

The apostles saw Christ in the flesh; they witnessed His sufferings and miracles and heard His words. We, too, desire to see, and to hear, and to be blessed. They saw Him face to face, as He was present in the body. Now, since He is not present in the body to us, we hear His words from books and are sanctified in spirit by the hearing and are blessed, and so we worship, honoring the books which tell us of His words. So also, through the painting of images, we are able to contemplate the likeness of His bodily form, His miracles and His passion, and thus are sanctified, blessed, and filled with joy. Reverently we honor and worship His bodily form; and by contemplating it, we form some notion, as far as is possible for us, of the glory of His divinity. Since we are composed of both soul and body, and our soul does not stand alone, but is, as it were, shrouded by a fleshly veil, it is impossible for us to arrive at intellectual conceptions without using physical images.

Since we are speaking of images and their veneration, let us bring forward and examine every aspect concerning them. Let us consider these questions:

What is an image? An image is a likeness and representation of something, showing in itself what it depicts. The image is not always like its prototype in every way. For the image is one thing, and the thing depicted is another; one can always notice differences between them, since one is not the other, and vice versa. For instance, the image of a man may give his bodily form, but not his mental powers. It has no life, nor does it speak or feel or move. A son is the natural image of his father, yet is different from him, for he is a son, and not a father.

Why are images made? Every image is a revelation and representation of something hidden. For instance, man does not have a clear knowledge of what is invisible, since the soul is veiled by the body; nor can he have knowledge of things apart and distant, because he is circumscribed by place and time. The image was devised for greater knowledge and for the manifestation of secret things, as a benefit and help to salvation, so that by showing things and making them known, we may be able to perceive hidden things, to desire and emulate what is good, and to shun and hate what is evil.

What may be depicted by an image, and what may not? Physical things which have shape, bodies which are circumscribed and have color, may properly be represented in image. Now, if nothing physical or material may be attributed to an angel, or a spirit, or a demon, it is still possible to depict and circumscribe them according to their nature. Being intellectual beings, they are believed to be invisibly present and to operate spiritually. It is possible to make bodily representations of them just as Moses depicted the cherubim. Only the divine nature is uncircumscribed and incapable of being represented in form or shape, and incomprehensible. If Holy Scripture clothes God in figures which are apparently material, and can even be seen, they are still immaterial. They were seen by the prophets and those to whom they were revealed, not with bodily eyes but with intellectual eyes. They were not seen by all. In a word, it may be said that we can make images of all the forms which we see. We apprehend these as if they were seen. If we sometimes understand forms by using our minds, but at other times from what we see, then it is through these two ways that we are brought to understanding.

We know that it is impossible to look upon God, or a spirit, or a demon, as they are *by nature*. We would be able to see them, however, if they appeared in forms alien to their nature. Therefore, God in His providence has clothed in forms and shapes things which are bodiless and without form, in order to lead us to a more particular knowledge, lest we should be totally ignorant of God and of bodiless creatures. Only God by nature is utterly without a body, but an

angel, or a soul, or a demon, when compared to God—Who alone cannot be compared to anything—does have a body: but when these are compared to material bodies, they are bodiless. God wills that we should not be totally ignorant of bodiless creatures, and so He clothed them with forms a shapes, and used images comprehensible to our nature, material forms which could be seen by the spiritual vision of the mind. From these things we make images and representations, for how else could the cherubim be shown as having form? *Amen.*

The Iconoclastic Movement of the Eighth Century, begun under the emperor Leo III, sought to abolish the use of iconography in the Church. St. John of Damascus, writing from his monastery of St. Sabbas in Palestine—at that time ruled by the Muslim caliph—was protected from the persecutions raging in the Byzantine Roman Empire against those who defended the images. In his 'Apologies', St. John dismantles the arguments of the iconoclasts and defends the Church's use of iconography with biblical and theological assertions. His teachings formed the enduring doctrine of the use of divine imagery in the Church.



