

The Death of God & the Life of Man

This Holy Friday, the Church remembers the "death of God."

On this day, the Lord descended into Hades and released its captives.

On this day, the meanings of life and death are reversed in the world. To commemorate this event, we go in procession holding the icon of the dead Christ, knowing it is life in the grave.

Before Christ, that is before his crucifixion and death, death was a terrible event in the life of man. It was the end in a sense, the last sentence on man to be executed. It was an unwelcomed ending of life. Man lives to build civilizations and a world that loves him. But man is surprised to see that he is going to cease and die, while the civilization that he built is continued!! By nature man refuses to go from the state of life to the state of the nothingness which is death.

Facing this existential challenge, it was natural for man to seek solutions. The Egyptians and the Pharaohs believed in some sort of life after death, and they worshipped their dead people. On the other hand,

the Spiritualistic Philosophy found refuge in the idea of reincarnation. Yes, nothingness is unacceptable. Man cannot bear to come into existence, so that existence itself brings him to nonexistence! The Jews themselves were comfortable with the idea of Hades, the waiting place for the dead. Hades was nothing but the land of forgetfulness and darkness, where God is not remembered and does not remember its existence. It is as if God forgets the dead and does not remember them.

There was a belief in the existence of some kind of life after the death of the body, but this idea was not clear. Christ tried repeatedly to make Lazarus' sister understand what he is talking about, when he said to her that her brother is going to rise, and that death is just a falling asleep. This concept was not clear in the minds of people.

Contemporary philosophy and atheistic ideologies are not new. It is rather a blind repetition of the old philosophies and religions. These philosophies emphasize the value of life and at the same time rob life of its true value.

Neitzsche was happy with the "death of God." He said this through the character of a crazy man in a play he wrote entitled God. The character said, "I bring to you good news, God died... and churches are nothing but the tombs of men." Sartre repeated joyfully the same words just a little before World War Two.

Camus the existentialist sees reality as bound to whatever is palpable, but whatever is faith is totally refused. He glorifies what exists now, all the external beauty and nature. He contradicted himself, however, when he described man as a soccer player who plays and

struggles all his life to get the ball to the summit of the mountain. As soon as he get there, he lets go of the ball that falls again to the starting point!! Yes, life for these people is a small death growing daily. Life is eaten up by death. The former gets smaller and the latter gets bigger. Birth is the beginning of death and not for life. A person's birthday is the first step towards death.

A life like that is death. In this way, life and death become synonymous.

The death of Christ on the Cross unveiled the true meaning of death, revealing as well the true meaning of life.

All those who died before Christ died and did not return. Christ is the only one who destroyed the deception of death by His death, revealing that it is just a falling asleep. After the bodily death of Christ, it became clear that there is no death, but there is life. God created us not to cease, but to last forever. The death of the body is not the end of life. Death does not overtake life. God forbid! God allows death to reveal to us the meaning and purpose of life.

So if man does not die and does not cease to exist, what is the meaning of life and death in the Book of Scriptures.

Life and death are the joy of the closeness to God or the hell of challenging and refusing God.

Death is an illusionary word. There is death of the body, but we will regain a glorified body. Death is then nonexistent, and the eternal life starts here, from birth. Birth is the first among many steps towards eternal life,

and the death of the body is only an event in life and not the end of life itself.

Birth is the beginning of life and life is as defined by God the Father, to know that He is the true God and that He sent Jesus Christ.

The death of Christ reveals to us that the current time is a "blessed time of the Lord," a time to build our life, our relationship with God. Whoever lives this life without a personal relationship with God is in death. Whoever believes in the Lord and loves Him, even if he dies he shall live again, as Christ said, and he has passed from death to life.

The death of Christ defined the meaning of our life, His death became life giving to us, and His wounds healed us.

Amen.