

Coptic Orth. Patriarchate
Bishopric of Youth



TWO RESURRECTIONS

And

GLORIES

BISHOP MOUSSA
Bishop of Youth

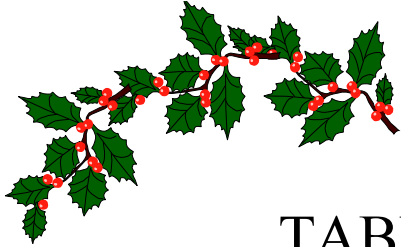
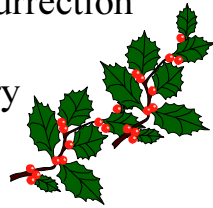


TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. The First Resurrection
3. The Second Resurrection
4. The Path to Glory



Introduction

Two Resurrections ... and Glories

The First Resurrection:

The first resurrection is that of Repentance, for as the Lord says: **“the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.”** (Jn. 5: 25) St. Paul also says: **“Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”** (Eph. 5: 14) The life that is mentioned here is the life of the spirit which is almost dead in sin, but which has now risen to a living relationship with God and a faithful struggle through grace.

The Second Resurrection:

This is the general resurrection, for as the Lord says: **“for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth ---- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”** (Jn. 5: 28,29). This resurrection will take place on the last day and the repentant believer will enter into eternal life and the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Path Between the Two Resurrections:

There is a path linking both resurrections along which there are signposts such as: repentance, prayer, the liturgy, contemplation, spiritual freedom, sanctity, and the kingdom. It is the Christian's path which starts with repentance and leads to the Kingdom. We have selected some of the sayings of the holy fathers about these signposts.

Dear Reader,

The journey from Repentance to the Kingdom is a blessed one. Let us take it together so that we may, with God's grace and power, reach where He lives eternal in His Kingdom, and where He grants man the joy of immortality.

May God bless these pages through the prayers of our beloved Shepherd,

His Holiness, Pope Shenouda III

And may the grace of God be with us all.

**Bishop Moussa
Bishop of Youth**

The First Resurrection

The Resurrection of Repentance

“Blessed and holy is he who has a part in the first resurrection.” (Rev. 20: 6)

The first resurrection is that of repentance, or the shaking off and forsaking of sin and the world of sin, and turning towards God and the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of this resurrection saying: **“the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.”** (Jn. 5: 25).

St. Paul also spoke about it when he addressed sinful man saying: **“Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light”** (Eph. 5: 14).

In these two verses, we encounter many things:

1. The state of the sinner who is drowning in sin.
2. The concept of repentance and the first resurrection.
3. The components of repentance and its characteristics.
4. The blessings of repentance and its gifts.



I. The State of the Sinner:

St. Paul compares the sinner to a person who is “asleep”, and both the Lord Jesus and the apostle compare him to a person who is “dead”.

A. Sin is Sleep:

Sleep is a state of unconsciousness, night, and dangers.

- Unconsciousness: The sinner is unaware of the ruin that threatens his life, for sin is truly destructive. There is not a single sin that is not destructive and the devastation of sin is total and inclusive. It is not restricted to the **spirit** which links us to God, but it extends to the **mind** with which we reflect, analyze, and take decisions, and to the **self** which is the repository of the rebellious instincts, the human needs that never bring satisfaction, unbridled emotions, evil habits, and harmful tendencies in life. The devastation of sin extends to the **body** also, leading to fatal diseases and to the debilitation of physical energies. It also extends to **relationships** since it spoils the sinner’s relationships with those around him, beginning with his family and ending with his friends and society!

- Sin is Night: While it exists, perceptiveness and wisdom are impossible, and through it, many thieves creep into the human’s conscience and into his whole being, starting with

the deprivation of the soul of fellowship with God, of the enjoyment of its membership in the Body of Christ, and ending with the social deprivation of constructive friendships and warm relationships, and passing through mental groping and losing one's way intellectually, shallow thought, and paucity of production. It also leads to psychological disorders including worry and anxiety as well as psychological diseases. Or it could lead to deviant emotional attachments, or to destructive and pernicious habits. Sin also robs the body of its health and vigor, making it vulnerable to physical and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) such as AIDS, syphilis, gonorrhea, Calamidia, herpes, etc. There are many thieves in the night which assault the human being, especially young people, to destroy their lives insidiously, robbing them of their temporal life here on earth, not to mention their heavenly crown in the Kingdom.

- Sin Is Taking Risks not the least of which is entering the world of crime through drug addiction which destroys the human brain and enslaves the addict as the God-given capacity of the brain to produce morphine ceases and the addict needs ever increasing doses of the external narcotic with the attendant withdrawal symptoms that result from his dependence on the drug. In order to obtain the drug, the addict spends all the money he has as well as his family's property, then joins the criminal world possibly ending in prison, and maybe even dead of an overdose! The same applies to intoxicants; alcohol destroys the kidneys and liver, a person's health and self-esteem, as well as people's respect for him. The same is true of smoking which afflicts young people with dread diseases such as lung cancer, heart trouble, stomach ulcers, and failing eyesight.

If these are the perils of drugs, alcohol, and smoking, how much more dangerous is impurity of all kinds with its terrifying diseases and its dire consequences such as failed marriages and its sorry end.



B. Sin is Death:

The death resulting from sin is fourfold:

1- Physical death: **“The wages of sin are death”** (Rom. 6: 23) Sin was responsible for our first ancestors having to leave the Garden of Eden, where the tree of life stood, to the land of sweat, misery, and physical death.

2- Spiritual death: When we left the paradise of God's love and entered into the hell of this earth, we entered also into the hell of evil spirits. Separation from God is the real hell, whether we experience it here on this earth or, God forbid, with the evil spirits in hell, awaiting eternal punishment.

3- Moral death: When we were turned out of the Garden of Eden to pursue a path full of thorns and brambles, we became prey to diseases, germs, natural catastrophes, and wild devouring animals. Man lost his worth and the dignity God had bestowed on him at creation when he was in paradise. When he enslaved himself to Satan, he fell prey to his influence, to his ploys, and to his temptations.

4- Eternal death: Eternal death is the inevitable end for all sinners who refuse to repent and who do not submit to the inspirations of the Spirit of God and to the guidance of His

life-giving word. There, there will be **everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.... into everlasting punishment**” (Mt. 25: 41,43).

That is why the Lord describes the sinful man as dead, as does St. Paul through the Holy Spirit: **“the dead (sinners are spiritually dead) will hear the voice of the Son of God”**(Jn. 5: 25).....; **“arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light”** (Eph. 5: 14)..; **“who were dead in trespasses and sins”** (Eph. 2: 1)....; **“even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ ... and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”** (Eph 2: 5,6).

II. The Meaning of Repentance:

Repentance is thus an awakening, a resurrection.

A. Repentance Is An Awakening:

Man wakes up from his slumber and sleep when he is rebuked by the Holy Spirit, and by the pricks of **“the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”** (Heb. 4: 12)

Thus, the Word of God is:

1. Living ... for in it is the life of the spirit and it emanates from a living God.
2. Powerful ... that is, it is able to influence and work within its listeners, rousing their consciences and working in their wills so that they move within the domain of sincere repentance, faithful striving, and spiritual growth.
3. A Sword.... able to pierce to the depths of the old man within us, so that his blood gushes forth crying out....
4. Two-edged... hitting to the right and to the left... saving us from the attacks from the left (sins) as well as from those from the right (pride).
5. Piercing even to the division of soul and spirit... this area that is deeply buried within us. Through the word and its light, we learn about our behaviors, our spiritual struggles, and our service, whether they are spiritual in motivation, in means, and in results, or whether they are egoistic serving self and not God.
6. And the joints ... that is, our daily behavior and manners as we evaluate them in light of the word.
7. And the marrow... that is, the guidance of the mind and the tendencies in our lives.
8. Discerning the thoughts and the intents of the heart... that is, the deeply buried will, whether it has evil tendencies or inner deviance, or dubious intentions.

Repentance, thus, is an awakening. That is why the apostle calls every sinner saying, **“Awake , you who sleep”** (Eph. 5: 14); if he listens to the voice of the Spirit and the call of the word, he is like the prodigal son: **“he came to himself, and said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned....’ And he arose and come to his father... and said....”** (Lk. 15: 17-21). Therefore, repentance is an awakening, then a decision, then a carrying out of this decision. It is impossible to omit one of them:

- ✱ **The awakening:** without it there would be no decision.
- ✱ **The decision:** a natural result of the awakening.
- ✱ **The implementation:** without it, the decision is worthless and the awakening fruitless.



B. Repentance Is a Resurrection:

It is a resurrection from the fourfold death of sin: physical, spiritual, moral, and ethical and an entering into a fourfold life:

1. The life of the body: When we are sanctified by the Holy Chrism and by spiritual striving, we have a foretaste of the body of light: purity of thought, feeling, instincts, senses, and direction. This is the foretaste that made Moses’ face bright with light and his innermost being bright with purity and patience.

2. The life of the spirit: When the mouth is filled with praise, knees are bowed in humility, tears flow from eyes, offerings are made from the heart in prayer, and hands are lifted in supplication to the Lord, the Lord embraces these struggling souls and fills them with the light of His love, pouring into their hearts the lights of the Kingdom, the dawn of His divinity, and the energies imparted by holy grace. This person becomes spiritual in heart, thought, behavior, and disposition.

3. Moral life: The believer feels that he is now one with the children of God and starts getting ready for the future heavenly kingdom which God has promised us, **“To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne”** (Rev. 3: 21). The feeling that we are children of God is beautiful and honorable: **“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!”** (1 Jn. 3: 1) **“Now we are children of God...”** (1 Jn. 3: 2); for **“to many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”** (Jn :12); **“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”** (Rom. 8: 29). Even **“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of Good, and if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ..”** (Rom. 8: 16, 17).

4. Eternal life: We have a sure and truthful promise: **“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”** (Lk. 12: 32), and **“he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”** (Jn. 5: 24). That is why **“all who are in the graves will**

hear His voice and come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life...” (Jn. 5: 28,29).



III. The Elements of Repentance

In the Bible and in Orthodox thought, repentance has elements and features.

A. The Elements of Repentance:

As defined by the Church:

1. Remorse over sin, from all the heart. However, many have felt remorse but have not been determined to stop sinning and have not had hope in the Lord, like King Saul and the traitor, Judas. That is why the second element is:

2. The determination to cease sinning; this is accomplished through:

- ✦ the sincere intention to cease destructive sin
- ✦ and as steadfast an effort as possible not to commit it again. However, man’s efforts are limited, and so he needs :

3. Faith in the Blood of Christ, for Christ supports us in our repentance and his grace saves us when we repond to it with a sincere fight. The Blood of Christ grants us **forgiveness** from our sins; **“in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins”** (Eph. 1: 7). It **cleanses** us from every sin; **“and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses us from all sin.”** (1 Jn. 1: 7). It **sanctifies** us for His heavenly kingdom; **“Therefore, Jesus also, that he might santify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.”** (Heb. 13: 12).. It **roots** us in the Lord; **“He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”** (Jn. 6: 56). It grants us **eternal life**; **“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raisee him up on the last day.”** (Jn. 6: 54).

4. Confession to a priest, bestowing peace to the soul in all its weaknesses, It also means asking guidance from the Spirit of God speaking through the words of an experienced priest, being granted absolution and forgiveness in accordance with the Lord’s promise: **“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven thm”** (Jn. 20: 22), **“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”** (Mt. 18: 18).



B. The Features of Repentance:

Sincere repentance has very definite features:

1. Quick, for being slow to repent converts silken bonds into iron bonds as sin holds sway over us. Also, who knows how long life will last so that he postpones repentance? **“Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts”** (Heb. 3: 7).

2. Decisive, for hesitating makes us vulnerable to falling into sin again with the possibility of not being able to escape its enslavement. Sin has a powerful force of attraction, and unless the individual is sincere, decisive, and forges ahead towards heaven like a missile, any hesitation or slackening could cause the missile to fall, being pulled by the earth's gravitational force. As for the wavering person **"let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord"** (Js. 1: 7).

3. Inclusive, for sincere repentance includes all the arenas of life: thought, feelings, emotions, will, actions, and behavior. Feeble repentance will not do, since a new patch cannot be used on old cloth; **"behold all things have become new."** (2 Cor. 5: 17).

4. Ongoing, for repentance, like the washing of feet, is renewed and lasting. It is not like baptism that is not repeated. Let us remember what the Lord said to Peter when he asked him to wash his hands and feet and how the Lord refused, considering him "all clean" because he had been baptized. **"He who is bathed, needs only to wash his feet"**; that is, repentance is renewed and continuous. (Jn.13:4-11).

5. Fruitful, for there must be **"fruits worthy of repentance"** (Mt. 3: 8). The fruits of repentance are many for it gives the repentant individual humility, purity, gentleness, love, and Christian conduct. It makes him ready to serve and to grow spiritually to the extent of consecrating and devoting all one's heart and all one's life to God.



IV. The Blessings of Repentance

How great its blessings are! We will only mention the ones the Lord and St. Paul spoke about. Repentance gives us:

1. Life with its four dimensions: spiritual, physical, moral, and eternal, for the Lord says, **"those who hear will live,"** and St. Paul says, **"arise from the dead"**. That is why the **'matania'** is a renewing of the mind, descending to the grave with Christ, and then rising with him to a new life. Let us remember the work of God with the child abandoned in the field where she was going to bleed to death and die of infection, hunger, and the lack of shelter. It is exactly the same with the sinner who is, like her, a stranger to the people of God, who is in danger of dying from the bleeding of sin, from spiritual hunger, from the cold night of sin, or from being devoured by the beasts of the earth and the spirits of the air. But the Lord visits her with His love and promises her life; **"I said to you in your blood, 'Live!'"** (Ez. 16: 6). He washes her with water and the spirit (Baptism), anoints her with oil, (Holy Chrism), feeds her with pastry and honey (Communion), and makes her fit to be a queen (the virtues).

2. Enlightenment, for **"and Christ will give you light"** (Eph. 5: 14). The repentant person, by the grace of God, possesses an attentive ear, an understanding heart, open eyes, a living conscience, and an enlightened mind. **"The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."** (Jn. 6: 63). **"Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path."** (Ps. 119: 105) **"For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light."**(Pr. 6: 23) **"The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple."**(Ps.119: 30).

Thus, when the mind of the repentant is enlightened, he makes right decisions and possesses discernment so that he **“may approve the things that are excellent”** (Phil. 1: 10), and he will **“abstain from every evil”** (1 Thess. 5: 22). He will put his feet on the right path that leads to eternal happiness and will be liberated from darkness and enter into the light. **“I was blind but now I can see.”** (Jn. 9: 25).

3. Eternity ...for repentance is the door to the kingdom and a return to God, a return to the warm eternal arms. **“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”** (Jn. 17: 3). The everlasting kingdom begins in the kingdom of the heart uniting it with the kingdom of the Church. This is the Biblical conception of the kingdom.

❖ The kingdom of love: **“The kingdom of God is within you”** (Lk. 17: 21). God, from Whom **“spring the issues of life”** (Pr. 4: 23), reigns over the heart of the repentant individual. The righteous man **“out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good”** (Lk. 6: 45). God first resides in our hearts at their spiritual renewal in Baptism; then the Spirit of God comes to dwell within us at the anointing with the Holy Chrism, and He comes to visit our hearts through Holy Communion, **“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”** (Col. 1: 27).

❖ The kingdom of the Church: ‘Thy kingdom come;’ the Church is the kingdom of God on earth and in heaven, for God reigns over this holy body, the Body of Christ, so that it all becomes a kingdom that never stops praising, just like those in heaven do. It makes an offering in the sanctuary (), that is, **‘the place that has become heaven’** where there is the body and blood of Emmanuel, the angels, archangels, and the saints.

❖ The kingdom of heaven: **“Do not fear little flock for it your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”** (Lk. 12: 32). It is the heavenly Jerusalem, eternal life, the coming heaven. **“Therefore, bretheren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”** (2 Pet. 1: 10, 11).

The kingdom of the heart makes us members in the kingdom of the Church, and the kingdom of the Church makes us fit for the kingdom of Heaven.

The Second Resurrection

The General Resurrection

“Because I live, you will live also” (Jn. 14: 19)

Ever since God created Adam and Eve, the resurrection has been an existing truth, a firm belief, and a lasting hope. The tree of life in the center of Eden, granting man life and eternity, is the first proof of this. The holy and divine breath that God breathed into the earth for a limited time and which returns to its Creator after the death of the body is even more important evidence. God gave man a rational spirit that does not die. This spirit is the secret of man's eternity. In the Old Testament, it says: **“Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”** (Ecc. 7: 12). It also says: **“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female He created them.”** (Gen. 1: 27). **“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”** (Gen. 2: 7).

That is why it is perfectly reasonable of Job to say: **“Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there.”** (Job 1: 21). King Solomon says that the Lord **‘put eternity in their hearts’** (that is, the hearts of humans) **“except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.”** (Ecc. 3: 11). David addresses himself saying: **“Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.”** (Ps. 116: 7). He did not say **‘go’** because his soul was to return to the place it had originally come from.

Thus, ever since man was created by God, he has been religious. The imprint God left in the depths of his soul, the spirit He breathed into him, the ability to transcend what is finite that He deposited into his heart all attest to an infinite Creator, an everlasting eternity, and an enduring immortality.

I. The Doctrine of Resurrection and Human Heritage

When God created man out of the earth and gave him a rational soul, He made of this soul and the mental ability given to man the means of learning about immortality, of faith in the resurrection, and of looking forward to eternal life. We can discuss the “logic” of the doctrine of the resurrection by considering these simple points:

A. The Infinity of Numbers:

Numbers are infinite, so how much more the Creator of numbers? If we deal with numbers in **ascending order**, that is, + 1, then + 2, + 3, until + million and on, we will reach + infinity (infinite increase). If we deal with numbers in **descending order**, - 1, then - 2, and -3, until - a million, we will reach - infinity (infinite decrease). If we add + infinity to - infinity, we will get one infinity. The cosmos, thus, has only one infinity; that is, it has one Being only who is infinite, without limits, eternal (- infinity), eternal (+ infinity), and without beginning or end. He is God!

This infinite eternal God instilled one of His holy breaths into man, thus giving him the potential to be immortal. The resurrection became a logical certainty, whether it is a resurrection to live forever in heaven or to live forever in hell. **“For the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth --- those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation”** (Jn. 5: 28, 29). **“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, butt the righteous into eternal life”** (Mt. 25: 46).

B. Inclusive Death:

Death is a truth that defies human understanding. Death comes to everyone; the rich and the poor, the believer and the unbeliever, man, animal and plants. No matter how hard a human tries, he cannot save himself from death. No man, from the beginning of creation, has been able to make himself immortal on earth, except through being recorded in history or in art. This is in fulfillment of the words of the Bible: **“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment”** (Heb. 9: 27). Even those who are alive on the day of the general resurrection at the second coming will, according to many theologians, undergo a kind of momentary death, after which they will be changed into the image of the body of glory. This is in accordance with the law just mentioned. The theologians explain the expression **‘we will not all sleep’** to mean **‘we will not all be buried in the ground’**. Even those who were taken up to heaven like Elijah and Enoch will return, according to most exegesists, to earth to die and rise like us.

We know that a law in philosophy states: “being is better than nihilism”. So how can God create man, redeem him when he falls, give him many years of life during which he strives continually, allow him to grow old, to become physically weak and infirm, or allow him to die young in an accident or natural catastrophe, and have everything end right there? What then would the presence of man on earth mean if the cycles of misery, happiness, and struggle end in nothing, in nihilism? Eternity is the answer. Man dies with his heavy corruptible body to rise with another incorruptible body that does not die!

C. Transcending Self and Endless Thirst:

Man is the only creature who constantly transcends self. This means that he is never satisfied with anything. In the depths of his being, there is a constant thirst for the unlimited and a hunger for the infinite. No matter how much he is given, he is like a deep fathomless well; no matter how many ambitions he realizes, he always aspires to more. Whenever he is given something, he yearns for another, and whenever he fulfills a wish, he makes another!

This is what the Lord was referring to when He said: **“Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again”** (Jn. 4: 13). The limitations of this world cannot satisfy the infinite ambition of man and his constant thirst for the infinite. Therefore, there is no answer to man’s endless thirst other than an Infinite Being, who is the loving God.

It was said of old: “Man’s heart is a triangle. If we put the globe into it, the three angles will remain empty. That is why man’s triangular heart can only be filled with God, who is Three Persons in One.”

This is a truth that we experience every day. The believer possesses contentment, satisfaction, and an inner happiness whose cause is the infinite treasure in the depths of his heart, the eternal life he will eventually enjoy. The believer experiences the Lord's words everyday: **"Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."** (Jn. 4: 13, 14).

D. The Human Mind:

The human mind is an energy that is essential for faith in God and eternity. The believer is mentally enlightened while the atheist lives in grievous darkness and deplorable ignorance. Samuel Beckett said: "Man leaves the darkness of the womb, goes through the darkness of life, and ends in the darkness of the tomb." What woeful meaninglessness!! How lost and bewildered!! Albert Camus, the existential atheist said: "This life is worth nothing except suicide, but I do not prefer that." The atheist is greatly bewildered and perplexed; life to him is worth nothing except suicide because, for him, life lacks taste and meaning. But he does not prefer suicide because God has instilled in him a mind and a conscience, which if he listened to and relied on, would lead him to believe in God and to realizing the divine eternity that lies within him.

Man with his finite mind sees God in many things: amazing creatures, an ordered universe, precise laws governing the earth and planets as well as the rhythm of life. The sun rises every day, giving man, animals, and plants warmth and life, and an awareness of the life-giving Creator, who is the Cause of existence. The earth in its orbit is precisely inclined at a specific angle towards the sun for the regulation of the seasons. A human cell contains 1000,000 genetic elements arranged in a secret code that God has started to reveal to man in modern times and which our ancestors knew nothing about.

Einstein was right when he said: "Whenever I have acquired more knowledge, I have realized my ignorance." This is because the secrets of the universe are endless. Isaac Newton was also right when he said about discovering the natural laws that were to change history: "I was like a young child, disporting himself on the shore of an immense ocean."

It is only pseudo-scientists who are atheists; a genuine humble scientist discovers something new about God's world everyday, so he believes in Him and bows down to worship Him. A real scientist often talks about "the glimpse" that God grants him, enabling him to discover amazing secrets by observing simple everyday occurrences. This is exactly what happened when Newton saw an apple fall to the ground. We have seen this phenomenon ever since the creation of Adam, but it revealed the secret of gravitation to Newton, an extraordinary discovery that led to outstanding scientific achievements.

The same is true of the movement of the lid of a tea kettle which revealed the energy that lay hidden in steam and led to moving trains, and exactly like Archimedes getting into a bathtub full of water and discovering the law of replacement.

E. Man's Conscience:

Another tremendous force within man leading him to be certain about God's existence and to believe the truth of the promise of resurrection and eternity is the inner divine voice within man. It leads him to God and is a holy imprint that makes him know the Creator. What the philosophers call 'Natural Moral Law' is another way of describing this inner divine voice that leads man to his heavenly Creator. Did not St. Paul say: **"For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves"** (Rom. 2: 14)? In spite of the absence of a written law, there is an inner law. St. Paul goes on to say about them: **"who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them"** (Rom. 2: 15). And when does this happen? He answers: **"in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."** (Rom. 2: 16).

Therefore,

1. There is an inner law working within man, the conscience.
2. This conscience either accuses or excuses; it accuses and rebukes, or it excuses and defends depending on whether the action is wrong or right.
3. On this basis, the final judgment on the last day is possible.
4. For the individual who obeys the voice of his conscience will know that God exists and so will ask for His light, his word, and His salvation which will be made clear to him in various ways until he reaches the Loving Creator, the Redeemer and Savior, and the Holy Spirit.



Thus, the doctrine of the Resurrection is a rational one that man has known and believed in ever since he was created. He did so by contemplating numbers, the inclusiveness of death, the unquenchable thirst within him, when he responded to his meditation on life in nature, and when he listened to the inner voice of conscience.

The ancients believed in the resurrection and thus built the pyramids and placed a statue next to the dead person so that when the body was decomposed, the spirit would be able to recognize its own body. They placed food, clothes, and other artifacts near the dead, believing in eternal life and immortality.

II. The Doctrine of the Resurrection and Divine Inspiration:

When man learned, through Divine inspiration, from the Old and New Testaments about the resurrection and immortality, it was not strange that he should readily believe in them, for the resurrection is a profound certainty that resides within man. In the Old Testament, God says:

- **“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Dan. 12: 2)**

- **“Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them, and it shall be an everlasting covenant with them” (Ez. 37: 26).** (This is in the story of bringing to life the dead bones to become a very great army).

- **“For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy. At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (Ps. 16: 10).**

- **“Let not the flood water overflow me, nor let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut its mouth on me.” (Ps. 69: 15).**

- **“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19: 25, 26).**

- **“Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust” (Is. 26: 19).**

When they read all this, they believed and lived out their earthly lives with this eternal hope within them.

God said in the New Testament:

- **“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth --- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.” (Jn. 5: 28, 29).**

- **“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob”; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” (Mt. 22: 32 -- Ex. 3: 6).**

- **“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.’” (Jn. 11: 25).**

- **“And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (Jn. 6: 40; see also 39, 44, 45).**

- **“Being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.” (Acts 4: 2).**

- **“For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” (1 Cor. 15: 52).**

- **“And the dead in Christ will rise first.” (1 Thes. 4: 16).**

- **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (1 Pet. 1: 3).**

- **“They are the sons of God, being the sons of the resurrection” (Lk. 20: 36).**

When the believers heard all this, and especially when the Lord Jesus Christ rose as a deposit of our own resurrection, they believed in the certainty of the resurrection and immortality and looked forward to eternal life and the heavenly Jerusalem. Therefore, they bore their earthly struggle against the flesh, sin, self, and the world and longed for heaven, advancing towards it with love and joy. They even chose martyrdom and counted death gain because it would transport them to an everlasting world and real happiness.

- **“For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” (Phil. 1: 23).**

- **“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil. 1; 21).**

- **“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus! For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thes. 4: 13 - 18).**

- **“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” (Phil. 3: 20 -21).**

- **“But godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” (1 Tim. 4: 8).**

- **“But we all, with unveiled faces, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. 3: 18).**

- **“For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up in life. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Cor. 5: 4, 8).**

- **“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according**

to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Rev. 20: 12 -15).

- **“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”** (Rev. 20: 6). That is, those who repent and who have experienced the first resurrection will reign for a thousand years on earth, between the Crucifixion of the Lord through which He reigns over mankind until the day of the general resurrection when they will rise with bodies of light and will enter into eternal life, and they will not be harmed by the second death (eternal death) in **“the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death”** (Rev. 21: 8).

As for those who believe in the Lord, they are waiting for **“the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostle of the Lamb.And the city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.”** (Rev. 21: 10, 14, 23, 27).

That is why the priest prays during the liturgy saying: **“Write our names in the Book of Life, in the Jesus Christ our Lord”** (St. Basil’s Mass).

That is also why the believers rejoice because of the **“exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature”** (1 Pet. 1: 4) and because **“an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”** (1 pet. 1: 11).

When they heard that no one knows this hour except God alone and that it **“will come as a thief in the night”** (2 Pet. 3: 10), they kept watch worshipping and praising faithfully **“looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God: (2 Pet. 3: 12), and they “account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation: (2 Pet. 3: 15). They obeyed St. Paul’s life: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”** so that they, through the grace of God, can say with him: **“Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”** (2 Tim. 4: 7, 8).

The Church, therefore, keeps vigil in its midnight praise, offering the Lord its three services, with its heart filled with firm belief in the struggle and its rightness, with the hope of immortality and the joys of Jerusalem always before it, for it says the three Psalms: 148, 149, and 150 in praise in the fourth watch of the night. Its constant cry is: **“Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”** (Rev. 22: 20).



The resurrection is strength in the present and future, It is the hope of immortality, Believing in it is the way of spiritual struggle, of real vigilance, of constant praise.

Our expectation of a happy eternity with the Lord stretches out through eternity.



“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”(Lk. 12: 32)

The one who goes through the first resurrection, repentance, is fit to experience the second resurrection, the final and general resurrection, and thus attains the kingdom.

- ✿ Repentance is the door to the kingdom.
- ✿ Repentance leads us to the fellowship of prayer.
- ✿ The Liturgy leads us to contemplation.
- ✿ Contemplation leads us to spiritual freedom.
- ✿ Spiritual freedom leads us to sanctification.
- ✿ Without sanctification no one can see God.

A. Repentance:

No heart can have peace without repentance. It is repentance that gave Christ and the Church St. Augustine, after which he cried out:

“Thou art everlasting throughout eternity, never changing..

Thou grantest me the grace of dwelling in my memory from the day I knew Thee ...

Why do I look for Thee now as though the places where Thou dwellest are many to me

Where did I find Thee when I became acquainted with Thee?

Thou wert high above me Thou wert within me...

Deep, deeper than my depths, and high, higher than my heights...

Late have I loved Thee....

Thou wert within, so how did I go looking for Thee without?

Thou wert within me.... but for my misery I was not with Thee!

Thou didst shine forth and glow and drive away my blindness...

Thou didst send forth Thy fragrance, and I drew in my breath and now I pant for Thee...

I have tasted, and now I hunger and thirst..

Thou didst touch me, and I was inflamed with desire for Thy peace.

(St. Augustine)

When the prodigal son returns to his father's house, and is touched by the love of his heavenly Father, his heart is inflamed with love and he moves from repentance to prayer!

B. Prayer:

The repentant sinner is confident that prayer is the secret of the life of the soul, whether it consists of the psalms in the Psalter, the Church praises, the arrow-like prayers or free fellowship with Christ.

- **“He who does not pray is spiritually dead and has no life within him.”** (St. John Chrysostom)
- **“Prayer preserves chastity”** (Mar Ephraim the Syrian)
- **“Prayer is the support of the one who walks the path of piety.”** (Fr. Youhanna El Daragy)
- **“Let us then ask God with prayer and supplication that we may put on salvation, which is Christ the Lord.”** (St; Macarius the Great)
- **“The fervor of prayer and contemplation burns sin and evil thought like a consuming fire.”** (Mar Ishak the Syrian)
- **Be silent so that your heart may speak, and silence your heart so that the Spirit may speak.”**(Al Sheik Al Rouhani)
- **Stand at the well with the Samaritan woman to learn how to worship in spirit and in truth. Remove the stone from Lazarus' tomb to learn what the resurrection from the dead really is Stretch your feet for Him to wash so that you are cleansed from your sin and defilement..... Sit in the upper room and wait for His coming behind closed doors Open your ears to the words of peace that He spoke ... Bow your head to obtain the last blessing before the Ascension.”** (Al Sheik Al Rouhani)

C. The Liturgy:

The person who repents and enters into the fellowship of prayer goes immediately to the Liturgical life. He is filled with the goodness of the house of God, the fellowship of the saints, and the hosts praising God.

- **“If a man is not united to the altar, he is denied the Bread of God.”** (Ignatios of Antioch)
- **When we go into church, we forget the worries and desires of the world. In the presence of God, we are filled with awe, humility and sanctity; we experience within us our ties with the other life and our sonship of God.”** (Fr. John Kronstadt)

- **“The house of God is a place of joy; a heavenly wedding awaits us there with a banquet He has prepared.”(Fr. John Kronstadt)**

- **“A brother told me that he used to see the light of the Holy Trinity whenever the offering was sanctified and every time the congregation bowed, and his heart was filled with joy.” (Al Sheikh Al Rouhani)**

- **“The face that has been sanctified by the sign of the cross does not bow to Satan, but preserves itself for the Lord’s crown.” (St. Cyprian)**

- **“The cross heals impure desire.” (St. Ambrose)**

- **“The cross heals anger.” (St. John Chrystotom)**

- **“Worship is due to the Spirit of God; as for the Person in the picture, to Him is peace, honor, and glory; to Him we pray and ask for intercession before the Lord.”(Bishop Yousab Al Abah)**

- **“Icons are a visible story and an enduring reminder.” (St. John of Damascus)**

- **“Lighting candles before icons is a form of supplication that our lives be enlightened, in imitation of the wise virgins who had lighted lamps.” (Fr. John Kronstadt)**

- **“When we go round the altar with incense, offering it to the icons, the relics of the saints, and to the congregation, we gather the prayers of all into a single voice which the angels raise with the prayers and intercession of the Virgin Mary. Our prayers are thus made stronger by the prayers and intercessions of the Saints.” (Fr. John Kronstadt)**

- **“He is deserving of all blame who neglects the reading of the Psalms.” (Mar Ishak the Syrian)**

- **“Learn the prayers of the Church and the Psalms.”**

- **“Force yourself to kneel before God (matanias) for it is He who moves the spirit of prayer.” (Mar Ishak the Syrian)**

Thus, in the Liturgy, man is united to Christ, the Head of the Church, with the host of righteous men made perfect, and with his brother and sisters in the faith, the members of the body of Christ.

D. Contemplation:

In this era of speed, the believer needs to make time for contemplation so that he is upright, his mind enlightened, and his soul filled. Even service should not render us too busy for contemplation if the two lives are truly one.

- **“O shepherd, may you not neglect your inner being when you are busy with the affairs of others.”**
- **“Would that we loved God and our neighbor from the depths of our hearts.”** (St. Gregory the Great)
- **“Who is the blind man whom others lead but the one who is ignorant of the light of divine contemplation.”** (St. Gregory the Great)
- **“Martha chose a good portion, but Mary chose a better one.”** (St. Augustine)
- **“Although the active life is good, the contemplative life is better.”** (St. Gregory the Great)
- **“After the saints soar high above to contemplate heavenly things, they descend to their loved ones to declare to them the beauties of heaven, and when they speak, their words pierce the hearts of their listeners and they are inflamed.”** (St. Gregory)

E. Spiritual Freedom:

Spiritual freedom comes from the faithful spiritual struggle against sin and through holy and pleasing deeds.

- **“He who has conquered all sins except one is still not whole and sound; he who has overcome all his desires except one is still a bound slave.”** (St. Basil the Great)
- **“The soul that loves all that is new is never satisfied; it spreads its sails to every wind.”** (Mar Ishak the Syrian)
- **“Do not think that acquisitiveness consists only of acquiring silver and gold, but of everything you desire and long for.”** (Mar Ishak the Syrian)
- **“The first move gained by God over the heart of the man who comes to Him is despising the world, and from this blessed move grows every good deed.”** (Mar Ishak the Syrian)
- **“.... free of the atmosphere that confuses spiritual life, striving constantly to reach God, not relying upon any gift or righteousness...”** (St. Macarius the Great)

That is how the soul is consecrated to God and becomes His alone.

F. Sanctification:

When the Spirit of God works in the believer, He brings forth within him spiritual fruits: **“love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”** (Gal. 5: 22) and he becomes consecrated to the Lord. Because he has been anointed with the Holy Chrism, he has become a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit.

- **“Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Cor. 3: 16)**
- **“ and holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” (Heb. 12: 14)**
- **“Be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Pet. 1: 16)**
- **“I am the Lord who sanctifies them.” (Ez. 20: 12)**
- **“ Not every calm person is humble, but every humble one is calm.” (Mar Ishak the Syrian)**
- **God does not accept the prayers of the one who does not consider himself to be a sinner.” (One of the saints)**
- **“Be a friend to the broken-hearted; share in their prayers and their works so that a spring of mercy is opened up to you.” (Mar Ishak the Syrian)**
- **“Gifts are not granted for the works themselves, but for the humility with which you did them.” (Mar Ishak the Syrian)**
- **If a beginner shows forbearance of insults and abuse, he is considered courageous, likewise the saint who puts up with laud and praise.” (Fr. Youhanna Al Daragy)**
- **“It is impossible that God leave a humble heart without consolation.” (Mar Ishak the Syrian)**
- **“All the sins are reprehensible to God, especially a proud spirit. Beloved, rebuke yourselves, confess your sins and the impurity of your souls so that the Lord may raise you.” (St. Anthony the Great)**
- **“Each mind is enlightened with a limited amount of light in keeping with the degree of his progress.” (Mar Ishak the Syrian)**
- **“When the mind is ravished during contemplation, it perceives the essence of things as though through a fog.” St. Gregory the Great)**
- **“Just as the Lord became man (the Incarnation) when He took a body, so we become divine (that is, we share in the Divine nature, but certainly do not become gods) through the word when we unite with His body; thus, we inherit eternal life with Him.” (St. Athanasius the Apostolic)**
- **“.... united with Him, but as fire is united with iron, making the iron fire (that is, hot and glowing) while it preserves its own nature. The iron becomes similar to the nature of fire. That is how the righteous resemble the nature of God.” (Al Sheikh Al Rouhani)**

- **“If the Divine Power unites with man, he is totally filled with a burning flame, with bliss and forgetfulness, and he rejects all that is in the world.” (Al Sheikh Al Rouhani)**
- **“When a virgin is engaged to a rich man, she receives many gifts from him before the wedding, but she is not persuaded to become completely his or to live with him before the wedding.” (St. Macarius the Great)**

G. The Glories of the Kingdom:

When the soul has gone through the valley of suffering and pain, when it has striven by the grace of God, when it has gone from one stage to the next, it becomes worthy of the second resurrection and of eternal life in the Kingdom.

- **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. ‘To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.’” (Rev. 2: 7)**
- **“He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” (Rev. 2: 11)**
- **“To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” (Rev. 2: 17)**
- **“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations. ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the potter’s vessels shall be broken to pieces’ -- as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.” (Rev. 2: 26 - 28)**
- **“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” (Rev. 3: 5)**
- **“He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.” (Rev. 3: 12)**
- **“To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (Rev. 3: 21)**

These are the glories of heaven where we find:

- **sanctity** and white clothes, victory and palm leaves.
- **fellowship** with God and His saints.
- **real joy** with the Lord.

- **hymns** and perpetual worship.
- **eternal rest** in the kingdom.
- **the heritage** that does not fade, disappear or die.



Beloved Reader,

Let us repent with sincerity, Let us strive with faithfulness and certainty With a heart that aspires to the Kingdom

For this is Easter, the feast of the Resurrection.

And may God be with you and me.