

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection

Christian faith is not merely information or theories about God, but it is focused on the living personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship is not only based on faith and love, but also on entering, in complete freedom, into a fellowship and unison with Him. More precisely, it is to enter into a New Covenant with Him. This is what Christians do in Baptism, which is to die to the old life and obtain the power of resurrection and new life. Here, knowledge becomes a living experience, and a relationship of steadfastness, unity, and delight from which the power of resurrection radiates.

Perhaps we notice that the power of the resurrection is always associated with the fellowship of passion and carrying the cross. We cannot enter into the new life except through the narrow road, the road of the cross, the road of dying to the world and crucifying the passions and desires, and dying of the wicked predispositions, even though this narrow road appears to project weakness, timidness, and sometimes humiliation or loss. Nonetheless, the truth of the matter is:



- The power of God works in the weak more than the powerful... *“God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty”* (1 Corinthians 1:27)
- The glory of God is more prevalent within the simple and poor people... *“Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?”* (James 2: 5)
- The grace of God recompenses man for all that he loses in the narrow road... *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”* (2 Corinthians 12: 9)

Therefore, it is not surprising to hear our teacher Paul the apostle proclaiming and saying: *“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”* (2 Corinthians 12:10)... *“But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”* (Philippians 3: 7-11).

This is also what St. Paul confirmed for us, the believers, that we all acquired a power of life and a power of death through baptism. This power works within us every day to suppress evil and to grow righteousness and spiritual fruits in our lives... *“Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him...”* (Colossians 2:12). *“Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”* (2 Corinthians 4:10).

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20). *“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin... Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 6: 3-11).

All this clarifies to us that the path to Resurrection and the new life must pass through the cross and death. It is also clear that we will not be able to truly know God, experience Him, and enjoy the power of His resurrection until we allow the power of death that we acquired in baptism to work within us without obstructions such that it allows us to enter into the fellowship of the passion of Christ every day. Thus, we become likened to His death, crucifying the love of money, positions, fame, esteem, first rows, bad eyes, and other lusts of the flesh. But if we don’t accept this cross, then what benefit will we have from the outward celebrations of the feast of Resurrection!?

May you enjoy true victory in Christ Jesus, crucified and triumphant, for many years to come.

Fr. Yohanna Naseef

fryohanna@hotmail.com

St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, Palatine, IL