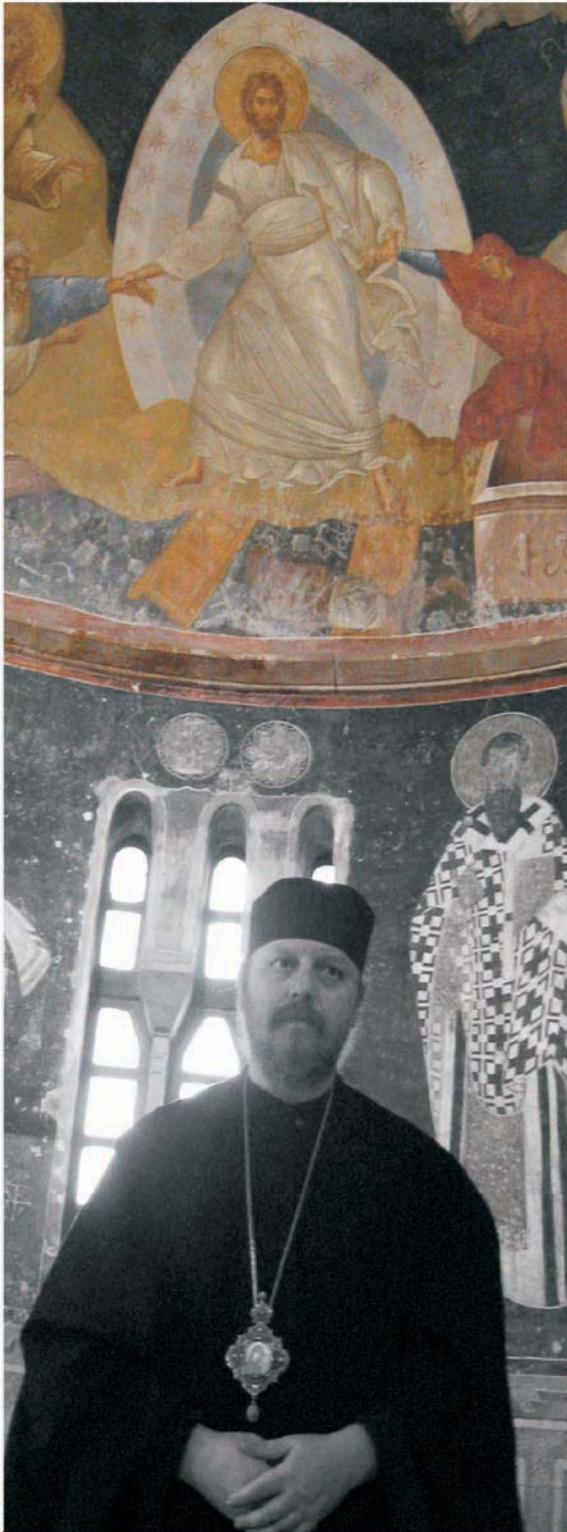


ΜΑΝΑΨΑΛΙΟ
XVI

RESURRECTION OF THE MIND

Metropolitan Nahum of Strumica



Graceful participation in the, for us, saving events of the life of the Godman Christ - something the Church liturgically offers us in its annual cycle of worship - should not be limited merely to its outward manifestation and meaning; it should rather be discovered and experienced in its inner essence and dimension. Thus for instance, in order to truly participate in and experience the days of the Passionate Week - Great Friday, Great Saturday, and the Sunday of the Resurrection - that is, in order to participate in and experience Christ's crucifixion, Christ's burial, and Christ's resurrection, we must go through the three spiritual stages in our personal spiritual life, too: from purification of the heart from the passions, through illumination of the mind, and all up to deification of the whole man (both body and soul).

The three events in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ - the crucifixion on the Cross, the three-day burial and the resurrection from the dead, reflect on and correspond with the three stages of the personal spiritual life and growth of every Christian - purification of the heart from the passions, illumination of the mind, and deification of the person. These three stages of personal Orthodox spiritual life are recognised and determined by three prayerful states of the mind. We highlight the mind as a criterion because both man's fall and healing start from it. The fallen mind is proud, distracted, and darkened. The healed mind is humble, collected in the prayer, and illumined. Prayer is a dialogue and union with God - the Holy Trinity. It, according to the holy Fathers, is the highest creative act and attainment of man. Prayer is presence and work of the Lord Holy Spirit in man: *no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit* (1 Cor. 12:3).

The first prayerful state of the mind comes about when man, in the spirit of repentance, assisted by his will and desire, collects his mind in the words of the prayer: *Lord Jesus Christ,*



have mercy on me (us). Pure prayer is a herald at the end of this prayerful state and a transition to the next one. We nail the mind on the cross of the prayer words and do not let it wander and be scattered around the world. This is the crucifixion and Great Friday of the mind.

The second prayerful state of the mind occurs when man, in the spirit of repentance, assisted by his will and desire, collects his mind in the words of the prayer, yet this time inside his sufficiently purified and opened heart. This prayer, called mind-and-heart prayer, is a special gift of God. Pure prayer is a harbinger at the end of this prayerful state, too, and a transition to the following one. We bury the mind, which is collected in the prayer words, in our heart's depths and it becomes dead to worldly cares and appeals. This is the burial and Great Saturday of the mind.

Why is it that we call Great Friday and crucifixion of the mind its first prayerful state rather than its second one, when we observe in both of them this collecting of the mind in the prayer words? It is so because at the first stage of personal spiritual growth man's heart is still bound by the passions and shut to the mind. The mind still does not know the appeal, consolation and protection of God's grace, which from the moment of Holy Baptism is present in the heart. Therefore man, constantly tormented by passions, with great effort and struggle labours to nail his mind on the prayer words.

The third prayerful state of the mind takes place when, although the man is sleeping, or talking, or reading, or doing anything else, his mind is at the same time immersed in the prayer words, united unceasingly with the heart. This prayer, which is called unceasing mind-and-heart prayer, is

an exceptional gift of God which, according to the holy Fathers, is given to only (scarcely) one pursuer in every generation. When the mind is in this prayerful state, it may experience Divine rapture (or ecstasy) and beholding of the uncreated Divine light. Contemplation of the Divine light is a forerunner of the end of this prayerful state. This is the Resurrection of the mind.

If we wish to truly participate in and experience Christ's crucifixion, Christ's burial, and Christ's resurrection, it is necessary that we, led by our spiritual father, pass through the three stages of spiritual growth: purification of the heart, illumination of the mind, and deification of the whole man - that is, it is necessary that we pass through the three prayerful states of the mind: its crucifixion in concentration, its burial inside the graceful area of the heart, and its resurrection permeated by Divine light.

The more man purifies his heart, the more his mind is illumined, and the more he is deified as a unique person. The more we nail and crucify the mind in concentration, the more we will bury it in the heart and illumine it, and the more we will deify and raise it. We have not got much choice: our mind will either be scattered around the world through the passions, or it will be collected in God through the prayer. At the prayers of our Sovereign Lady the Theotokos and Evervirgin Mary and at the prayers of the great hesychast and our teacher saint Gregory Palamas, may our Lord Jesus Christ grant us to find the Kingdom of heaven within us and the Resurrection with Him already in this life, as a foretaste of the eternal one!

Christ is risen!