

Saint Basil the Great - By One Death and Resurrection the World was Saved

It is only one death in favor of the world, and only one resurrection from among the dead

*From the book on the Holy Spirit by Saint Basil the Great (330-379), bishop
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Our God and Savior realized His plan to save man, raising him from his fall and making it so that he would leave behind the state of estrangement - which he experienced by his disobedience, by bringing him back to a state of familiarity with God. This was the motive for the coming of Christ in the flesh, of His living among men, of His sufferings, of His cross, of His burial and His resurrection: that man, once saved, would regain, by the imitation of Christ, his ancient condition of an adoptive son.

And so, to arrive to a perfect life, it is necessary to imitate Christ, not only in the examples He gave during His life - examples of meekness, humbleness and patience - but also in His death. As Paul says, the imitator of Christ: *dying through death itself, so as to attain also the resurrection from among the dead.*

Moreover, in which manner can we reproduce within us His death? By burying ourselves with Him by baptism. In what does this manner of burial consist of, which serves us to imitate? In the first place, it is necessary to cut off all ties with our prior life. And nobody can attain this without the new birth of which the Lord tells us about, since regeneration, as its very name indicates, puts an end to one's prior life. This same thing happens with those who run in a stadium: these, upon arriving to the end of the first part of the race, before turning around, pause for a brief moment, so as to then embark on their return; like this, also, in this change of life" it is necessary to experience death between the first life and the one to come; a death that puts an end to the preceding acts and gives beginning to the subsequent ones.

How can we then imitate Christ in His descent to the region of the dead? - by imitating His burial through baptism. In effect, the bodies of those who are baptized remain, in a certain manner, buried under the waters. For this reason baptism signifies in an arcane manner the casting away of the works of the flesh, according to those words of the Apostle: You have been circumcised, not by a surgical operation, but with the circumcision of Christ, that consists of the letting go of your mortal condition; with Christ you were buried in baptism, since baptism purifies the soul from the stains brought into her by the influx of this life in mortal flesh, according to how it is written: *Wash me and I will become whiter than the snow.* For this we recognize only one saving baptism, since it is only one death in favor of the world and only one resurrection from among the dead, and from both baptism is the source.

PRAYER

Omnipotent and eternal God, grant us to participate so vividly in the celebrations of the Passion of the Lord so that we may attain His pardon. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the Unity of the Holy Spirit and is God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Crucifixion by Bernardo Daddi (1290-1348)

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