

## THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE SON OF GOD, PREMISES FOR THE DEIFICATION OF THE HUMAN PERSON THROUGH UNCREATED DIVINE GRACE

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### ABSTRACT

*The dichotomous structure of the human person defines her as a being who transcends time and space towards deification through grace. Nothing of the materiality of the created world could rest the soul of man, who is permanently in movement, incomprehensible to rationality, towards the Absolute. The death and resurrection of the Son of God is the foundation of man's objective forgiveness and implicitly of his resurrection. Through these acts, humanity is ontologically changed, restored to the state of obedience to God and receives the possibility of deification, chooses, in complete freedom, to collaborate with the uncreated divine grace.*

**Keywords:** Christ, human person, deification, uncreated divine grace.

### INTRODUCTION

The work of redemption of human nature from the slavery of sin and death, accomplished by the incarnate Son of God "in the fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4), culminates in death and resurrection, the supreme sacrifice on Golgotha. These two acts, indissolubly linked, are the main elements of redemption, being the basis of the preaching of the Holy Apostles and implicitly of their canonical successors. Thus, the Holy Apostle Paul says: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (I Corinthians 15:3), from which it follows that the correction of the human person is imperatively necessary to the subjectivation of the fruits of Christ's objective salvation.

The human person was created by God to live in grace and implicitly in the love of the Holy Trinity. The first disobedience had as its first consequence the exit of man from grace. In the absence of grace, man, expelled from the face of God, has come to be limited to material-rational things, and through sin he has come to sink into the darkness of ignorance, considering himself god.

In His omniscience, God knew forever that the man He created would fall through disobedience. Being the Absolute Love Himself, the Creator forever decides the salvation of man, through the work of redemption accomplished by Christ, the Son of God<sup>1</sup>. "God, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved)" (Ephesians 2:4-5). Therefore, He, as the Son and Image of the Father, comes into the utmost proximity to human nature, through hypostatic union, to restore the Image of God in man.

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Cross in the Theology and Cult of the Orthodox Church*, in *Orthodoxy*, no. 3, 1975, p. 405.

## 1. THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, THE FOUNDATION OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE HUMAN PERSON

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The sacrifice of the Son of God represents for all humanity the possibility of coming out of the slavery of sin and death, that is, the possibility of ontological restoration through fully free and conscious collaboration with the uncreated divine grace, through which the human person can appropriate the fruits of objective salvation.

If the first man, Adam, through disobedience suffered his death as a natural consequence of sin, and through him the whole humanity received this inheritance, the sacrifice of Christ God has the fundamental role, imperatively necessary for human nature, to ontologically restore each person individually, who chooses to collaborate with the divine grace, to appropriate it and thus be able to reach the state of deification according to grace. That is why, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the Holy Apostle Paul emphasizes: "For since by a man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead" (I Corinthians 15:21), and then goes on emphasizing that, if the first Adam brought sin and death to the world, the New Adam brings the resurrection: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15, 22).

Through the act of the Incarnation, Christ assumes our nature in His Hypostasis, so that human nature may also participate in His glorious sacrifice and resurrection. Thus, if through Adam the created nature became subject to sin and death, in Christ it enjoys forgiveness and resurrection. With the gift of the victory of human nature over death in the Person of Christ, man becomes in solidarity with Him, through the mysterious incorporation into His body. If the descent from Adam defines the human person as subject to death, the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ God elevates human nature to the capacity to work with uncreated divine grace and to appropriate the fruits of objective salvation. That is why St. Paul says to the Corinthians in his Second Epistle: "For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus's sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (II Corinthians 4:11).

The fact that the Son chooses to become what he was not, that is, our brother according to humanity, denotes the great kenosis of the Logos, a kenosis through which he entrusts all humanity, until the end of time, to the love of God, revealed through the incarnation according to our limited understanding<sup>2</sup>. The absolute obedience of the Son to the Father is factually evidenced on Golgotha, where He, innocent before death, accepts death on behalf of our nature, to heal human nature of the first disobedience and of the effects that followed. "Kenosis appears as the ultimate expression of God's love and self-giving through humility."<sup>3</sup>

Concretely, the human nature assumed by Christ God in His Hypostasis through the act of the Incarnation is raised to the state of obedience to the Father, canceling Adam's disobedience, and this form of absolute obedience is expressed through the act of sacrifice. That is why St. Paul says: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19).

Without Christ's sacrifice, the salvation of man, created completely free, would have been impossible. Since the Old Testament, man has been aware of the need for sacrifice for the reconciliation between the Divine and the human, but the totality of sacrifices was

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Constantin Galeriu, *Sacrifice and Redemption*, in *The Voice of the Church*, no. 1-2, 1973, p. 109.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Constantin Galeriu, *Sacrifice and Redemption...*, p. 110.

external to the human person, so they did not produce any ontological change in the human nature, hence their inefficiency. Moreover, the one sacrifice of the Son of God represents the conclusion of the sacrifices of the Old Testament Law that could not bring salvation. Therefore, "the death and resurrection of Christ represent the effective transition from the Law, subjected to sin and death, to the Law in which man can deify himself according to grace".<sup>4</sup> The grace, as an uncreated divine energy, comes to the aid of human nature to help it appropriate the fruits of the objective salvation achieved by the Son of God on Golgotha. Man's collaboration with grace, through sustained personal effort, gives the imperative possibility for human nature to participate in the love of the Holy Trinity, truly experiencing the state of deification according to grace.

This idea is particularly important in today's society, because once the purpose of the incarnation, sacrifice and resurrection of Christ is understood, man, although trapped in the materiality of the world, understands that he cannot be limited to the sensory, he must transcend the time for the encounter with God in eternity. The two acts, the sacrifice and the resurrection performed by Christ, represent key moments in the history of humanity, in the sense that, without them, human nature could never have risen to the height to which it was raised by the Son of God. Therefore, the Son of God becomes man, like us, but without knowing sin, so that through His death and resurrection, He brings us the forgiveness of the Heavenly Father and the possibility of deification. "Christ died for our sins (...), he was buried, and (...) he rose again" (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

## **2. THE HISTORICAL EVENT OF CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION, THE FOUNDATION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF THE DEIFICATION OF THE HUMAN PERSON**

The historical event of the death and resurrection of the Son of God is the indisputable proof of the possibility of the deification of man by grace. Without Christ's death, humanity would not have been ontologically healed of the consequences of the first disobedience, and because Christ is true God and a full man, in all things like us except sin (Hebrews 4:15), death could not hold Him, as He was life Itself. With the resurrection of Christ, the human nature is called to spiritual resurrection, by grace, to live forever in the love of the Holy Trinity. This is also highlighted by the great Apostle Paul who says: "If you have risen with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1).

The objective fruits of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection are permanent, and they are addressed to all people in all times and places. "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Romans 10:9). The one who dies and rises with Christ through baptism becomes a partaker of life in the love of the Holy Trinity and can affirm like the Holy Apostle Paul: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

The resurrection of the Son of God represents the pinnacle of human history in the sense that, without the resurrection, the sacrifice of Christ would have been limited, it would have been a common act dominated by death. Only through the resurrection does the Logos show His victory as God over death, this act being the foundation of all Christian theology and experiences. That is why St. Paul says: "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless, and so is your faith" (I Corinthians 15:14). Between the two historical acts, the

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Prof. Dumitru Popescu, *Roman Catholic Ecclesiology after the Documents of the Second Vatican Council and Its Echoes in Contemporary Theology*, in *Orthodoxy*, no. 3, 1972, p. 342.

death and resurrection of Christ, there is an indissoluble connection, in the sense that there could be no resurrection without death, the two events being defined in an ontological relationship. "There is no discontinuity between the act of death and the act of Christ's resurrection, death being only an act through which one goes toward the resurrection."<sup>5</sup>

Although different in function, death and resurrection could only be accomplished by the incarnate Son of God, for He alone, in His capacity as God and Man, as a result of the appropriation of human nature by hypostatic union, not being subject to death, could bring liberation to human nature from the tyranny of sin and death. "But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life" (Romans 6:22).

If the act of Christ's death represents the end of physical, material life, as St. Paul says, "Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer" (II Corinthians 5:16), the act of the resurrection of the Son of God is the beginning of new, eternal life, in the love of God, "for if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (II Corinthians 5:17). "Through the cross dies disobedience, the sin that followed and implicitly spiritual death, giving everyone the power that leads man to resurrection".<sup>6</sup>

Both the death and resurrection of Christ are of paramount importance for the existence of human nature in eternal life. No one can experience eternal life except by passing through death, for in Christ, death takes on a different meaning from the nihilistic proposal of philosophy. In Christ, death no longer represents the fateful destiny of the human being, but is the blessing through which man, the image of the Image, can participate in eternal life in the love of the Holy Trinity, by appropriating during life the fruits of objective salvation. In this regard, Father Dumitru Stăniloae states: "Christ, the Savior of all, can never be separated from the cross that He assumed so that we might be alive through His resurrection. Our resurrection begins from the moment of Christ's death."<sup>7</sup>

By cooperating with uncreated divine grace, man works for his own subjective salvation by aiming at the fruits of objective salvation, the guarantee of salvation being founded on the resurrection of Christ. Thus, the sacrifice and resurrection of the Son of God represent the undeniable historical basis underlying the possibility of the salvation of the human person. "The two acts have immediate effects upon the lives of the believers, transfiguring it, the person of Christ, through assumed humanity, being the source of our accessibility in the infinity of divine life."<sup>8</sup>

Humanity's participation in the life in Christ and implicitly in a life in grace is accomplished even in this world, in the Church through the Holy Mysteries. Only by relating to this form of life does man's life acquire a real meaning, Christ's victory over death being also the victory of our nature, through the human nature assumed by Christ in the act of hypostatic union.

Just as through Adam the whole of the human nature became subject to sin and death, in Christ, the conqueror of death, human nature acquires again the possibility of deification by grace. Christ's victory over death means the ontological restoration of human nature and

<sup>5</sup> Fr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Cross in the Theology and Cult of the Church...*, p. 405.

<sup>6</sup> Fr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Cross in the Theology and Cult of the Church...*, p. 406.

<sup>7</sup> Fr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Intimate Link between Death and Resurrection*, in *Theological Studies*, no. 5-6, 1956, p. 276.

<sup>8</sup> Prof. N. Chițescu, Fr. I. Todoran, Fr. I. Petreună, *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology*, Second Edition, vol. II, Cluj-Napoca, Reinterea Publishing House, 2005, p. 57.

its restoration to obedience to God, this obedience being the gateway that leads man to eternal life.

The participation in the life in Christ begins for man in the Church through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, a mystery through which every human person participates in the acts of Golgotha, in order to be able to die and rise with Christ. This is explicitly expressed by the great Paul when he says: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ have been 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" (Romans 6:3-4).

Man's personal participation in the death of Christ through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism brings with it the effects of the death and resurrection of the Son of God through which man becomes, from the slave of sin, the free person in the love of the Holy Trinity, an aspect highlighted by St. Paul when he says: "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace" (Romans 6, 14). In a related note, participation in Christ's death through Baptism means the resurrection with Him and the possibility of the participation of the human person, by grace, in eternal life, "the rebirth from Baptism being the beginning of the process of renewal".<sup>9</sup>

### 3. THE ONTOLOGICAL CHANGE OF HUMAN NATURE THROUGH THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

Man's redemption from the slavery of sin and death culminates in the resurrection of the Son of God. He, being God, takes upon Himself the sin of our nature, in order to heal the human person of disobedience to God the Father, and implicitly to free her from the consequences of disobedience. "Without the act of the Lord's resurrection, everything could have been reduced to naturalness, for death on the cross, if it had not been accompanied by the resurrection, would have been only an ordinary death."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the historical act of Christ's resurrection represents the foundation of the ontological change of human nature, in the sense that, without the resurrection of the Son of God, our nature would have remained subjected to sin, and the possibility of deification according to grace would have been impossible.

The fall into sin of the first parents Adam and Eve represented the exit of human nature from grace, and the absence of grace in man meant the impossibility of deification by one's own powers. Moreover, the anchoring of the human person only in the materiality of the world by not relating correctly to God has had important consequences, the need for ontological change being imperatively necessary. Thus, as we see in the Biblical references of the Old Testament, although man felt the need for reconciliation with God, the totality of the sacrifices offered could not imply the ontological change of the human person, precisely because the sacrifices were external to him. Only the sacrifice and resurrection of the Son of God, in which the human nature assumed by Him actively participates, brings about the ontological change of our nature and implicitly the possibility of deification by grace.

The Resurrection of Christ is the supreme act that gives meaning to the life and resurrection of human nature in the love of the Holy Trinity. This historical act ontologically changes our nature, bringing it to the first state, to the state of experience of uncreated divine grace, a grace that changes man from the corruptible to the incorruptible, as the Holy

<sup>9</sup> F. Durwell, *La Résurrection de Jésus, mystère de salut*, Paris, 1963, p. 270.

<sup>10</sup> Fr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Intimate Link Between Death...*, p. 277.



Apostle Paul affirms: "We shall not all die, but we shall all be changed, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Corinthians 15, 51).

No philosophy of the world dared to express the possibility of the deification of human nature, precisely by the fact that, before the resurrection of Christ, this was impossible for our nature. "Without the ontological change of human nature, everything would have become a world of the dead, a world that could in no way bring glory to God, because none of the dead can dare to the state of forgiveness and the possibility of deification."<sup>11</sup> Only through the resurrection of Christ is human nature restored to the state of grace, in the sense of the capacity of the human person to collaborate with the divine uncreated grace freely and consciously and implicitly to strive permanently towards the state of deification. "The resurrection of Christ is the joy of man's resurrection and implicitly of liberation from the tyranny of death."<sup>12</sup>

The Resurrection of the Son of God ontologically changes the human person, who receives a real purpose of life, namely the striving towards deification according to grace. With this end, man does not limit himself to the materiality of the world or to its temporality, for the dignity he is invited to participate in belongs to the eternity of God. Experiencing living in grace even in this life, man is not frightened by physical death, because the death of the body does not have the fatidic nihilistic meaning proposed by philosophy.

#### 4. THE RESURRECTION OF THE HIGH PRIEST CHRIST AND THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING IT IN ACTUALITY

Man, a dichotomous being, defines himself by his aspiration to the eternity of God. Human nature cannot conceive of limitation to the materiality of creation, nor can it accept the fateful destiny of death. Moreover, man cannot be limited to the sensory, a fact proven by the prerogatives of eternity that he proves precisely through his dichotomous structure, material body and spiritual soul. The attribute of the immortality of the soul expresses the fact that the human person was created by God to be a partaker of eternity and "there is no other option for man than to return to God who created him".<sup>13</sup>

Starting from the fact that man was not created for death and since there can be no contradiction in God, it was imperative to save man from the condition of disobedience, sin and death, and the only possibility was the act of sacrifice and resurrection of the High Priest Christ. The relationship between the Creator and the creature had to be restored, but not as a gift external to man, but the active involvement of human nature was necessary.

Thus, in the hypostasis of Christ the Savior, human nature assumed through the Incarnation is brought back to the state of obedience to God the Father, proven by the act of the supreme sacrifice of the Son of God incarnate "in the fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4). Christ's sacrifice and resurrection restores our nature to another condition of life, free from sin and death, "in a transcendent way, in a way of life not subject to corruption".<sup>14</sup>

The importance of Christ's resurrection for all humanity also emerges from the fact that this act is not a natural one, controllable by man. The realization of this act was possible only in Christ, as a gift of God, by which man understood the height of the dignity to which he is called, namely that of being God according to grace, of truly participating in the love of the Holy Trinity. "Through the resurrection of the Logos, the perspective of eternity, of

<sup>11</sup> Fr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Intimate Link Between Death...*, p. 277.

<sup>12</sup> Fr. Constantin Galeriu, *Sacrifice and Redemption...*, p. 194.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Evdochimov, *L'Orthodoxie*, Delachaux et Niestle, Neuchâtel, 1965, p. 313

<sup>14</sup> Oscar Cullmann, *Christ et le temps*, Delachaux et Niestle, Neuchâtel, 1966, p. 47

deification according to grace, is opened to human nature, a perspective for which humanity was created, and man, changing ontologically, that is, making himself willingly obedient to the Father, tends towards the likeness of God."<sup>15</sup>

The resurrection of the Son of God is also the restoration of man to the primordial state in the sense that, as the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar also points out, "the foundation of creation lies in the mystery of the cross and the resurrection".<sup>16</sup> By the assumption of our nature by the Son of God through the act of the Incarnation, He raises human nature to the first state of obedience, He raises it beyond the materiality of the world without changing anything of the nature, but overcoming materiality means for man the taste of grace and the experience of the state of deification. The human nature assumed by Christ becomes according to the divine will, thus it becomes contrary to sin and thus is healed of disobedience and implicitly restored to the condition of being able to experience deification. "For human nature fallen into sin, death was an insurmountable reality, but in the Hypostasis of the Logos, by the fact that human nature is assumed by Christ, the true God, it cannot remain encompassed by death, but is raised to resurrection by an act specific only to God, the Only One without death."<sup>17</sup>

The act of Christ's death and resurrection must be understood as a unitary whole<sup>18</sup>, as an eternal mystery known in God, in the sense that, through it, human nature returns to the original meaning of life, changing ontologically, shifting the emphasis from the self-centered-materialistic form of life to the ever-deeper knowledge of God. "By resurrecting Christ, human nature implicitly resurrects, which goes beyond the boundaries of death, rises above nature, and God intervenes to receive it into eternity."<sup>19</sup>

Through the resurrection of Christ, our nature acquires the capacity to change ontologically through collaboration with uncreated divine grace, in order to experience the highest mode of existence. After the fall into the sin of the first disobedience, the Image of God in man was darkened, which is why none of the people could dare such an elevation of nature, an elevation possible only through the sacrifice and resurrection of the Son of God. "Through the sacrifice and resurrection of the Logos, indissolubly linked acts, the work of human nature is modified, a work that is renewed, done according to the divine will."<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that the ontological change of human nature is not achieved as a result of a constraint resulting from collaboration with uncreated divine grace, but rather, the change for the better of man, is achieved through the experience of life in free and fully conscious struggle with sin, the goal being deification according to grace.

The renewal of human nature objectively brought about by Christ through His sacrifice and resurrection has a permanent character through the grace of the Holy Spirit, a grace by which man, by his own will, freely chooses to do the will of God in response to the love he receives from the Creator. Living in Christ, the human person lives in grace and

<sup>15</sup> Paul Evdochimov, *Le Christ dans la pensée russe*, Les éditions du Cerf, Paris, 1970, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, translated by L. Lhaumet and H. A. Prentout, Aubier, Paris, 1947, p. 76.

<sup>17</sup> Fr. drd. Ilie Moldovan, *Theology of the Resurrection in the Work of Saint Maximus the Confessor*, in *Theological Studies*, no. 7-8, 1968, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Fr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Inner Link between the Death and the Resurrection of the Lord*, in *Theological Studies*, no. 5-6, 1956, p. 275.

<sup>19</sup> Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Answers to Thalasia*, trans. by Fr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, Philokalia, vol. III, Sibiu, 1974, p. 69.

<sup>20</sup> Fr. Dumitru Radu, *The Ecclesiological Character of the Holy Mysteries and the Problem of Communion*, in *Orthodoxy*, no. 1-2, 1978, p. 51.

performs the works of grace that bring him the fruits of the objective salvation accomplished by the Son of God on Golgotha. This experience of life in Christ and implicitly in grace represents, for the human nature, the possibility of expressing in fact potentialities that had not been experienced before the sacrifice of the Logos. Through these potentialities, man raises himself to another mode of existence where he develops, where he constantly tends towards God, so that his deification becomes a natural act of nature.

The real meaning of human life can only be understood through the correct relationship to Christ, in the sense that, just as the human nature assumed by Him has risen, so we too are called to the resurrection. Through faith in the resurrection of Christ, man participates in His life through divine uncreated grace, and this way of life goes beyond the rational knowledge of materiality. By living in Christ by faith, it becomes "the faculty raised up in us by the Spirit, which leads us to enter into this pneumatized world".<sup>21</sup>

Living life in Christ through faith and grace means living in communion with God and with others, and its realization begins in this world, "within the Church through the Holy Mysteries, in this theandric work together, attributed both to temporality being present in the material world, and to eternity according to its component elements"<sup>22</sup>.

Man's entry into the Church of the living God, brought about through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, reaches in the Eucharist the most intimate moment of the encounter between the Son of God and man, this Holy Mystery being the one that "actualizes in signs the risen body of Christ, that is, the Lord Himself, in His relationship with the world and with us, at the same time transfigured and transfiguring"<sup>23</sup>. The material body of man is permeated by the spiritual through the Holy Eucharist and thus, through the encounter with Christ, the human person begins to taste eternity.

The correct relationship between the human person and God the Triune in Persons offers, on the one hand, the profound meaning and meaning for which the Creator, out of love, creates man as the crown of all creation, and on the other hand, man becomes aware of his own limitation, therefore the inability to raise himself by his own powers to live in the love of the Holy Trinity.

In another words, the separation of the human person from Christ and implicitly from uncreated divine grace brings man's inability to experience life in God's love. By relating man to the sacrifice and resurrection of the Son of God, he becomes aware of the value that the Creator offers him out of love, the two acts representing the objective restoration of the crown of creation.

## CONCLUSION

The sacrifice and resurrection of the Son of God represent for the whole of creation in general and for man in particular the two acts, indissolubly linked, by which the crown of creation is ontologically changed objectively and restored to the state of obedience to God. Through collaboration with uncreated divine grace, the human person tends towards the state of holiness, of deification according to grace, and such a state can only be experienced in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. "The resurrection of Christ and our resurrection are therefore a certainty that cannot be disputed. It has made impressive ontological changes in the human

<sup>21</sup> Stéphane Charalambidis, *Le Mystère de la Resurrection*, in *Contacts*, no. 2-3, 1972, p. 102.

<sup>22</sup> Alvin C. Porteous, *The search for Christian Credibility*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, New York, 1971, 152.

<sup>23</sup> G. Martelet, *Resurrection, Eucharist and Genesis of Man - Theological Paths of a Christian Renewal*, Desclee, 1972, p. 100.



being."<sup>24</sup> The real value of humanity can only be expressed in appropriate terms in relation to the act of Christ's resurrection, an act that defines human nature as capable of resurrection, capable of participating in God's love. This love, amplified and fully revealed through the sacrifice and resurrection of the Logos, represents the foundation of life in this material world, in which one can taste the love of the Holy Trinity and implicitly of Her eternity.

Man was not created for death, but for eternal life. Therefore, the participation by grace of the human person in the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ means the restoration of the Image of God in man, who receives the possibility of striving towards the likeness of God. Through His sacrifice and resurrection, Christ the Savior brought about the objective forgiveness of all and fully revealed God's love so that "you know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

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<sup>24</sup> Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *The Great Catechetical Discourse*, trans. by Fr. D. Cristescu and N. I. Barbu, Bucharest, 1974, p. 82.

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