29/04/2024

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros Homily for Lazaros Saturday



Λόγῳ σου Λόγε τοῦ Θεοῦ, Λάζαρος νῦν ἐξάλλεται, πρὸς βίον παλινδρομήσας….

O Word of God, by your word Lazaros now leaps forth, taking up again the path to life….[*]

Indeed, my beloved Christians, today the Lord Jesus Christ reveals His complete identity as the Logos of God and Lord of the living and the dead, when He calls forth Lazaros from his four-day tomb.

He calls for His friend, whom He left to bring His disciples to faith.[†]

He calls for His companion, as He grieves with the sisters of Lazaros, and whose tears bring the Lord to weeping.[‡]

And He calls for us all, we who mourn, like our brother Archon Emmanuel Katsoulis and his family, who grieve the recent passing of their beloved Marina, an instrumental force in bring about this Challenge Liturgy. We remember her pioneering work this day, and we listen to the example of her life, even as we heed the word of the Word Who calls to us all.

He calls because He is the Lord of the living and the dead, and He will come again

to judge the living and the dead, πάλιν ἐρχόμενον μετὰ δόξης κρίναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, as we affirm every time we recite the Creed.

Shortly before His Passion, the Lord appeared on Mount Tabor with the two great Prophets of the Old Covenant –Moses, who was buried by God Himself,[§] and Elias, who was taken up alive into heaven.[**]

In the midst of these two living beings, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of His own "Exodus" that He was going to fulfill in Jerusalem. [††] This "exodus" was His passing over from death – for our sakes – unto life, and liberating all those in the grave. Before the miracle of the raising of Lazaros, the Lord was revealed in His Transfiguration on Tabor as the Master of life and death.

And at the tomb of Lazarus, He exercised that authority in view of everyone. For Lazaros was four days dead. His soul has passed beyond his body. He had traveled to Hadës, which is called "Sheol" in Judaism, and described in the Psalms of David as the place where one is "forgotten, cut off, laid in the lowest pit, in darkness, and the shadow of death." [‡‡]

Lazaros was four days dead! One more day than the Lord spent in the tomb, to show that he was dead beyond doubt. He was even beginning to reek with the stench of death. And his sisters, Martha and Mary, had fallen far beyond hope into depths of grief and mourning.

And in the moment of their deepest sorrow, the saintly Martha and Mary expressed their frustration and remorse to the Lord – Martha said:

"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." [§§]

And Mary said:

"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not be dead." [***]

Their sisterly heartache presses on the Lord, until we read:
When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Judeans who had accompanied her wailing with grief, he shuddered in His spirit, and was shaken deep within. [†††]

Saint John Chrysostom says that although Jesus weeps as man, He raises Lazaros as God. [‡‡‡] But it is all the human interaction – the words, the tears, the emotions that are pouring forth from His friends and are encircling the Lord, that bring Him to face the Tomb of Lazaros. And there, the incarnate Word of God calls him back from the dead by the words:

Λάζαρε, δεῦρο ἔξω!

Lazaros, come forth! [§§§]

The Lord Jesus Christ called His friend back from the dead by speaking with authority and with full emotion, emotions that we also feel and that He understands.

My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ:

As we prepare to traverse this Holy Week, let us listen deeply when we are in Church and attend the services. Let us listen for the Voice of the Lord to speak to us, whether softly or loudly. This Challenge Liturgy challenges us all to bend our ear to the Word of God.

The voice of the Lord, the words of the Lord. He is calling your name, just like Lazaros, to set you free.

Listen for His voice this week. Quiet your hearts and minds, and come to the Church, where you hear the echoes of His Message of love and truth.

Καλή Δύναμη, καὶ Καλή Ἀνάσταση!

[*] Exapostilarion of Lazaros Saturday Matins.

[†] Cf. John 11:13.

[‡] Cf. John 11:3-35.

[§] Cf. Deuteronomy 34:5-6.

[**] Cf. II Kings 2:11.

[††] Cf. Luke 9:30-31¨ Καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες δύο συνελάλουν αὐτῷ, οἵτινες ἦσαν Μωϋσῆς καὶ᾽Ηλίας, οἳ ὀφθέντες ἐν δόξῃ ἔλεγον τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ ἣν ἔμελλε πληροῦν ἐν ῾Ιερουσαλήμ.

[‡‡] Psalm 87:5-6 (LXX).

[§§] John 11:21.

[***] John 11:32.

[†††] John 11:33.

[‡‡‡] Homily 63 on the Gospel of John.

[§§§] John 11:43.

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