

# SIMPLIFYING FAITH LECTURE SERIES

By His Eminence Metropolitan Bishoy

## #1 Trinity, Incarnation and Redemption

*In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.*

### **Is Christianity A Difficult Religion to Comprehend?**

The Lord Jesus Christ revealed to us that even young children could understand Christianity by saying, *“I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes”* (Matt 11:25). He also said, *“...no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him”* (Matt 11:27).

Moreover, He promised us that the Holy Spirit would teach us everything and remind us of all His words. He said, *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you”* (Jn 14:26).

The Holy Spirit reveals the Father and the Son to us. He reveals all what concerns salvation, redemption, and the importance of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation. The Holy Spirit reprimands us for our sins, and shows us our need for salvation; thus teaching us that achieving eternal life is only through Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit Who reveals our true unpleasant nature, whenever, we are deprived of the grace of salvation, justification, and sonship to God. It is He who admonishes us, making us realize our grave predicament, as a result of being rebellious to God and violating His commandments.

### **Sin:**

In paradise, Satan influenced, encouraged, and tempted man to contradict the commandment of God. He made man doubt God's love. Satan told him that God does not want man to become like Him, knowing good and evil. When man doubted God's love and ate from the tree that God had warned him not to eat from, he fell under the power of the devil, and the authority of sin.

Due to sin, corruption entered the nature of man, and death was introduced as a result. When in the tombs we find decaying corrupting corpses being eaten by worms, we recognize the result of sin, and that its wages is death (see Rom 6:23). The state of corruption that man reaches in a tomb is proof for the corruption that resulted from sin. Observing this, man begins to think of a method of escaping this life of corruption. He yearns for salvation from death and its corruption.

A state of hostility between man and God emerged. It is true that the wages of sin is death, but man started to fear God, and is no longer able to recognize His love. He needed someone to reconcile him to God, he needed someone to rescue him from the authority of sin, to give him the

strength to become victorious over sin, to heal his nature from sin, and to restore him to the life that he had lost due to his sin.

It was impossible for God to abandon man, without exerting Himself for man's sake, since God loves man and knows it was the devil that tempted and deceived him.

However, it is not possible for God to forgive man without proclaiming His wrath against sin. How can God forgive man without paying the price of sin? God did not want vengeance; but God's holiness needed to be revealed. He should show the extent to which He hates sin. In the meantime, He wants to save man and show him the degree of His love for him.

### **Redemption and Atonement:**

God wants to reveal to man the viciousness of sin, so that man would hate sin. It is not adequate that God forgives man or pardons him, He has to cure him. If He forgave him without paying the price of sin, God's holiness would not be revealed clearly (in man's viewpoint). Man might feel that: God can accept sin, is not concerned with it, or does not care about it since He deals with it lightly. Consequently, man would consider sin easy and natural, not trying to be liberated from or abandon it. God had to act in a way that would cause His love and His holiness to meet, in order to show man the extent of his hatred for sin. Hence, there should be redemption and atonement, for God to forgive and pardon, since God's forgiveness cannot be priceless.

If He left sin without accountability, then for God, sin is simple and not a concern or a care. This would be an offense against God. If we said that God does not care for sin, or that He might accept it or let it pass, then how can He be Holy.

It is true that God is full of love, yet simultaneously He is Holy, therefore He should manifest His wrath against sin and His love for man. Manifesting His wrath against sin causes man to fear sin, which helps man understand God's love for him. Here emerges the importance of redemption and of the salvation that Christ fulfilled on the cross.

### **The Conditions for A Redeemer:**

Christ carried our punishment, which was death. By carrying our sins, although He is righteous, devoid of sins, and undeserving of death; He is able to redeem us and pay the price for the sins of mankind. For God, the value of this redeemer is beyond measure. Not anyone can become the redeemer.

A redeemer should be someone who never sins against God and is all righteous, for how can he redeem others when he himself deserved death. The value of this redeemer should be limitless and vast. According to God's economy, there is no one more precious to be offered for the redemption of man, than His only Begotten Son, the Incarnate Word. Consequently, in the gospel of Saint John, our Lord Jesus Christ says, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (Jn 3:16). In other words: God loved the world, to such an extent that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

## **The Solution to Man's Problem:**

On the cross, man's problem was solved. How? For the answer man needs to know two things about God simultaneously. **He should know that God profusely hates sin, and at the same time, God limitlessly loves him.** If man only knows of God's loves for him and overlooks his sins, then God's image (in his eyes) is unholy. Sin would become delicious and light to man, and he would not hate it. On the contrary, if he only saw God's wrath against sin, and did not perceive His love for him, he would fear God. His relationship with God would be full of enmity, and he would not feel His Fatherhood. It might be a problem for man to grasp this concept, but not for God.

It is written in the Psalm, "*Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed*" (Ps 85:10). On the cross mercy and truth met together, but how? We saw on the one hand mercy, and on the other truth, justice, or righteousness. God wanted to show us how much sin upsets Him.

When the Lord Jesus Christ carried our sins, and paid the price, we saw Him whipped, tortured, and suffering. We begin to ask ourselves: "Christ did nothing wrong, why should he suffer all this? Is this all because of my sin? Does sin hurt God's heart to this degree? Does God hate sin to this level? A level that would make Christ, the righteous and holy, the only begotten, suffer to this extent in order to pay the price of my sin?"

This makes man feel sin is hideous. He witnesses the Lord Jesus Christ being whipped, and tells himself, "The Lord is being whipped for my sake. He is paying the price, because He loves me and wants to save me from eternal destruction. The whip does not touch me physically, but I feel as if I am the one being whipped because this is caused by my sin. God wants me to feel ashamed. I feel the whip is hitting my feelings. As if God wants to tell me, 'Is this the pleasure of sin that you enjoy and love so much? I am here paying its price. Are you going to love it again, or will you start to hate it?'" Consequently, Man starts to hate sin.

In spite of God's love for a sinful person, the sinner does not sense God's love when he is being punished for his sins. However, when God carries the punishment, and He pays its price, man feels that he caused the suffering of the righteous and holy One. He then feels he should repent and hate sin.

## **The Story of a Sailor:**

Once there were two brothers who were sailors on deck of the same ship. The older brother was a saintly and righteous person, while the younger was and an evil and sinful person. One day a tempestuous storm rose up and the ship was about to sink. Since the amount of people on deck was greater than the lifeboats' capacity, the captain decided to cast lots. Whoever's name was picked went into the lifeboats, and the rest stayed on deck to meet their fate.

It happened that the name of the older brother was picked to go into one of the lifeboats and be saved, but the name of the younger brother was not picked. The younger brother wailed and cried because he felt he was close to death. His older brother told him, "Do not weep, take my place and go into the boat, and I shall take your place and stay on deck." The younger brother

asked him, “What’s your fault that you should take my place?” His response was, “If you die at this moment while in your sins, since you have not yet repented, you will be ruined and will go to Hades, and finally Hell. I love the Lord Jesus Christ and I am eager to be in His bosom. Through His grace I shall go to paradise, I am “...*having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better*” (Phi 1:23). It is better that I should die since my death will not lead to my destruction, while yours will. I have one condition however: that you lead the life that I used to lead. I am going to die in your place; so you should live for me. Do you agree to this condition? Can we make a covenant on this condition?” The young brother agreed, so the older hugged him and kissed him and left him to depart and enter into the lifeboat in his stead. The lifeboat went into the sea and was rescued. The younger brother started to repent and regret his sins, while the older was waving to him from the drowning ship. He kept waving as if he was reminding him of the covenant and of his promise; as if he was telling him live my life as I am going to die in your place.

This story shows us what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us. If we carried our sins we would be eternally destroyed, but not if He carried them; He never perishes, since He is life. It is written, “*In Him was life*” (Jn. 1: 4), and He said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life*” (Jn 14: 6).

### **The Power of Life:**

The power of life that was in the Lord Christ was stronger than the power of sin. God wants to make His hatred of sin evident, and wants to demonstrate how much it angers Him. When the Lord Jesus Christ carried all our sins and paid their price, “...*the just for the unjust*” (1 Pt 3:18), He declared His wrath against sin. Death could not take hold of our Lord Jesus Christ while it can swallow us never to be freed again, unless Christ Himself frees us from its belly.

When Satan wanted to move Adam to sin, he asked Eve to look at the tree. “*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*” (Gen 3:6). To carry out this deception, Satan concealed himself in the serpent who was more cunning than any beast of the field (see Gen 3:1).

### **Concealing His Divinity:**

Consequently, our Lord Jesus Christ was determined to let Satan drink from the same chalice from which he forced man to drink. The only begotten Son of God, the Word of God, was incarnate and concealed His divinity from the devil. Coming in the image of man, He perplexed and bewildered the devil. Sometimes he was certain that this is the Word of God, but at others the devil doubted. For example, the Lord hungered, after fasting on the mount, and the devil was perplexed. Throughout His life on earth the Lord concealed His divinity.

The Lord performed many miracles, preached the life of holiness and repentance, and attracted people to God’s love. This infuriated the devil against Him until ultimately he decided to crucify Him on a cross of wood. The wood was taken from a tree.

Saint Ephrem the Syrian says that, on the cross *the fruit* was hanging on the wooden tree of old. Could you, death, swallow *this* particular fruit (Jesus Christ) that is hanging from *that* tree (the

cross)? Death here, is the devil of whom it is written, “...*who had the power of death, that is, the devil*” (Heb 2:14). The devil decided to swallow it, and death here opened its mouth wide in order to gulp this yummy hanging fruit. He saw that this fruit was, “*Fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold*”.

## **Death Was Swallowed Up By Life:**

The devil decided to kill the Lord in order to get rid of Him. At the moment he gulped this fruit, he gulped Life, and the result was that death was swallowed up by life. To make this point clear, imagine a dark room swallowing a beacon of light, what would happen? Darkness will disappear. So did the room swallow up the beacon of light, or did the light swallow up darkness?

Another example: if someone was very disturbed and angry, and swallowed a large quantity of Nitric Acid, who consumed the other? It is the Nitric acid that consumed him.

A third illustration is of certain kinds of fish. It is common sense for larger fish to eat smaller ones. However, there are some kinds of tiny fish that eat the stomach of the big fish that swallowed them. It gnaws from inside until it makes a hole, escapes, then feeds on the big fish. So, in spite of the fact that the big fish swallowed the tiny one, the truth is that the tiny one ate the big fish.

Saint Ephrem the Syrian said that death gulped its opposite, which is life; so death was gulped up by life. Hades gulped up life, so it was not able to tolerate life inside itself. How can Hades swallow up Christ who is Life? It could not!

In true, the Lord Jesus Christ declared the holiness of God on the cross in bearing the wrath of God that resulted from the sin of man, but at the same time He conquered death and overcame it.

An example: ask a wrestler whether he could overcome a lion. If his response is that he could, not only overcome a lion, but also let the lion eat him, then overcome the lion. Can anyone believe him? If he could do this he would be the strongest person on earth. This is what our Lord did. He let death swallow Him, then through death He trampled over death. He resurrected victoriously from the dead on the third day. No one raised Him up, He was raised up by His divine power: in other words He raised Himself up.

When our lord Jesus Christ raised Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, “...*He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth!*” (Jn 11:43). However, concerning His own resurrection He said, “*The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up*” (Matt 17:22-23). Concerning the temple of His body, He told the Jews, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*” (Jn. 2:19). They thought that He was speaking about the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem that was recently renovated.

The prophet said, “*Where is thy penalty, O death? O Hades, where is thy sting?*” (Hos 13:14, see also 1Cor 15:55). The Lord Christ resurrected from the dead. Had He not resurrect, the story of salvation would have been very miserable and heartbreaking.

By His death the Lord solved the problem of sin, but we are still left with the problem of death.

Through His death our Lord solved the problem of sin, and through His resurrection he resolved the problem of death which was a result of sin.

The resurrection delighted the hearts of the disciples, the church, and the entire world. It is written that He, “...*brought life and immortality to light*” (2Tim 1:10); the “...*eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us*” (1Jn 1:2).

### **A Story:**

Following is a story that might help us comprehend the importance of the resurrection for humanity. It would also help us comprehend the concepts of atonement, redemption, and salvation through the blood of Christ.

A man had a daughter whom he always charged not to be out late, because he cared very much for her, and was worried about her. She thought her father did not love her because he was restricting her, always giving her orders, was ignorant and old fashioned. She wanted to go out with her friends and enjoy her time.

One day she put on her jewelry and decorated herself. As she was leaving her father asked her where she was going, and she answered that it was none of his business. Being so worried about her, the father followed her undetected. Suddenly, a group of evil youth came upon her with knives, wanting to attack her, seduce her, and steal her jewelry. She screamed, not knowing that her father was near. The father could not stand it, he rushed towards his daughter crying out: “Leave my daughter, leave my daughter!” They were astonished at his sudden arrival, so they left the daughter and started to attack the father with their knives. She ran away, but upon looking back she saw them slaughtering him.

She reached home weary and broken down. She felt that she was the cause of her father’s death. He was slaughtered before her eyes. She kept blaming herself because she did not obey him when he used to warn her. She went around the house kissing his cloth and belongings. She kept remembering his advice, blaming herself that she once thought that he did not love her, and that his advice was a sign of hatred. She never thought that he loved her to this extent.

She continued in this condition of distress, depression, and not tolerating life, until one day the door knocked. She opened, and to her shock it was her father. She hugged him and asked how he was back?

The father said that he came because he could not leave her blaming herself for the rest of her life for causing his death. As his love for her made him die for her sake, also his love for her brought him back to life. He told her I came back to life so you would feel happy for my resurrection, relieved for your repentance, happy for your return to me, and happy for your life with me.

This was the joy the church experienced when it met the resurrected Lord. This is the meaning of the resurrection.

## **The Resurrection:**

The Lord came back alive to the church, as if He wanted to tell her, “I would not let you suffer, not even the grief of the cross.” As if He is telling everyone, “It is true that I paid the price for your sins, but you will continue all your lives feeling that you committed a crime; that you are the cause of My blood, therefore your hands are polluted.”

Saint Paul said concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, “...*was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification*” (Rom 4:25). We could have never been justified or regained our peace, unless He was raised from the dead. If through the cross the price of our sin was paid, then through the resurrection He informed us that He completely forgave our sins, forgave us, and was reconciled with us.

Man needed to feel relieved regarding his future life. God declared His wrath against sin on the cross. How can man be confident that God has forgiven his sins, unless he realized that life was renewed?

This is the resurrection that Christianity preaches all over the world. When the disciples wanted to choose someone to replace Judas Iscariot (the disciple who betrayed the Lord) they said, “*Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection*” (Acts 1:21-22).

Christianity is the religion that preaches life and resurrection. It preaches the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ since, “...*Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep*” (1Cor 15:20). Currently, man believes in life after death. When he observed the Lord ascending to the heavens, he knew that there is a heavenly kingdom, which surpasses this life. Thus, Christ our Lord used to say, “*I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*” (Jn 10:10).

## **A Story:**

Once an enemy influenced a king’s people not to love him because he was tough, tyrannical, and authoritarian. He felt they did not like him because they did not know him well enough. He dressed in simple cloth and went out of the palace, to live among the people. He started to solve their problems, show them compassion, offer them wisdom, nurture their sick until they are healed, and the like.

The people loved this man so much, since they had never seen someone so wonderful. They were fed up with their king, and wanted this man to become their king.

One day they seized him, and carried him to the palace shouting, ‘Long live the king’, and placed him on the throne. He took off his simple cloth, and told them, “I truly am the king. Now you know me and know my love for you.”

The Lord gave the same response to Philip, one of the twelve disciples, when he was asked, “*Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us. Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so*

*long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, Show us the Father? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?"* (Jn. 14: 8-10), therefore the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God.

### **Is Christ God or The Son of God:**

Once a ten year old Sunday School girl came to me saying that in school they asked her, "Is Christ God or the Son of God? Sometimes you say He is the incarnate Word of God and sometimes you say the only begotten Son of God." I asked her, "Is not every Prince a king?" When we say that he is king it is correct. At the same time, when we say that he himself is the son of the king it is also correct, since he is of the royal family.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is God because He has the same divine essence with the Father, and is the Son of God because He is the Word of God, begotten from the Father before all ages.

### **Is Christ A Deified Man:**

Others ask if Christ is a man who became God. Our response is that we reject the idea of deifying a man. Christ is incarnate God not a deified man. Consequently, we say in the creed of faith, "We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages".

"Before all ages," means before the creation of the world, the angels, and man. "Light of Light," as the delivery of rays from the sun. "True God of True God, begotten not created, of one essence with the Father".

"Begotten not created," means that the Father did not create Him. Therefore we call the Son, the Word of God.

### **The Generation of the Son from the Father:**

A perfect analogy is the mind and the thoughts. The mind generates thoughts; however, there is no mind devoid of thoughts. If the mind does not think, then it is not a mind. The mind begets the thought but does it have to get married in order to generate the thought? Of course not! Light generates rays and it does not get married to do so. Fire also generates heat and does not have to get married. Therefore the generation of the thought from the mind and the generation of rays from light is a natural generation.

Furthermore, the mind generates thought, but does this mean that the mind exists before the thought. Of course not, because a mind that does not think is not a mind. Mind and thought are one thing that can never be separated from one another. Likewise, if I separate the Word of God from God, God will lose his divinity.

Moreover, if the mind has no beginning, then the thought will have no beginning. Likewise, if the Father is eternal, then the Son is eternal. The Father and His Word are one; we can never separate them from one another. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "*I and My Father are one*" (Jn

10:30). Not only the Father and the Word are one, but the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit. This is why we say 'In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God Amen'.

We believe that God is one because it is impossible to have more than one God, but God the Father could never be God, unless He is the Father of the Word, His Son. There is no father without son, and no son without father.

A perfect example for this would be a fountain of water and its stream. The fountain generates the stream. The fountain generates and the stream is generated, but can we ever find a fountain with no stream of water? If the fountain had no stream, then it does not exist. Likewise, could there be a stream without a fountain? From where would the water spring? The fountain should have a stream, and the stream should originate from a fountain.

Consequently God said, "*They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns -- broken cisterns that can hold no water.*" (Jer 2:13). Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "*I am...the life*" (Jn 14:6). The Father says that He is the fountain of living water; so the living water that comes forth from the Father is the Son, since the Son says, "*I am the life*". The Father is the begetter, the Son the begotten, but this is definitely excluding marriage.

### **The Birth from Saint Mary:**

The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ from Saint Mary is unlike His generation from the Father. In the Orthodox Creed of Faith we say, "Begotten of the father before all ages".

He was born of the Father before all ages and before the creation of the entire world. His generation from the Father is according to His Divinity, a spiritual generation, without a mother. When He wanted to save us, "...*God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*" (Gal 4:4-5). "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*" (Jn 1:14). The eternal Word of God is in the bosom of the Father forever as it is written, "...*The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.*" (Jn 1:18). When the Word became incarnate we saw God, accordingly He said, "...*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*" (Jn 14:9).

### **How Was He Incarnate:**

With no marital relation, the Holy Spirit came upon Virgin Mary, sanctified, purified and filled her with grace. He formed, from her body and soul, a human nature that the Word of God assumed, and through it He was incarnate in order to be born as a man. Through His birth of the Father He was called the Son of God, and through His birth from Saint Mary He was called the Son of Man. The Son of God is Himself the Son of Man, no one else.

Even after being born of Saint Mary, He continues to be called the Son of God, therefore the angel told her, "...*that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*" (Lk 1:35). Even the Lord Jesus Christ Himself sometimes used to call Himself the Son of Man, and sometimes the Son of God.

Just as He generates from the Father before all ages, a divine generation, without a mother, He was born of Virgin Mary in the fullness of time, a human generation, without a father. We should not confuse the two births.

Some simple lecturers ask, 'who is the father of Christ'? When the listeners answer that He has no father, they conclude that His father is God. This is an incorrect explanation.

Christ our Lord does not have a human father because He was born of Saint Mary without a father; on the other hand He does not have a divine mother because He was born of the Father according to His divinity without a mother.

### **The Trinity:**

We already learned that Christ is the only begotten Son of God who was incarnate to save and redeem us. We also learned that the Holy Spirit teaches us, guides us, and leads the entire church. The Holy Spirit conducts us towards repentance, works in the sacraments of the church, and grants the priestly authority. This authority was granted to the apostles from our Lord Jesus Christ who breathed the Holy Spirit in their face after His resurrection. Now, we want to understand how the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one.

This concept of the Trinity can best be illustrated by Fire. Fire consists of flames from which light and heat proceed. If we ignite a fire in a dark cold room, it will generate light and heat to that room. We call each of the three: the flames, the light, and the heat, fire. I can say that I lit the flames, or I lit the fire. I can say, the heat warms me, or the fire warms me, meaning the heat of the fire. So, we can call heat fire. The flames, the light, and the heat, the three are one fire. They are not considered three fires. However the flames are different from the heat and from the light.

In spite of the fact that the flame is different from the light and from the heat, if the flame did not generate light and emanate heat it would not be a fire. From a distance, an artistic drawing of flames might look real, but upon close inspection it would become evident that it is not a real fire, since neither its heat nor its light could be felt or observed. Does anyone ask why the fire generates light and emanates heat? This is common knowledge concerning the nature of fire.

Some people ask why should God be a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit? The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. God the Father is the Father, God the Son is the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit. We do not need to constantly say God the Father, we can simply say God, similar to the illustration of the fire. We do not need to constantly say the flames of the fire, the light of the fire, or the heat of the fire. These are only appellations but we know that if there is no Son, there is no God. Similarly if there is no heat, then there is no fire. Even if there were flames there would be no fire, because flames without heat are useless. Similarly, the mind without thought is useless.

Why is it so difficult to conceive that God generates? An apple produces a nice smell, a generator generates electricity, the mind generates thought, and the fire generates light and

flames? Everything in the world generates except stones and dead matter. Do we think it is too much for God not to be stone?

It is God's nature that He generates and He declared that being One God: He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **How Can the Incarnate Logos Die?**

Some ask, 'How can the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, die'? The answer is that the Lord Jesus Christ died according to His humanity, but not according to His divine nature.

To clarify this concept we give the following illustration: man has a soul and a body, certainly the soul does not die, but the body of the same person dies. After the body dies, the soul remains alive since Christ said about the Father, "*I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living.*" (Mk 12:26-27).

Man's body could die while his body and soul are still united. Both the human soul and body of our Lord Jesus Christ were united to His Divinity, while the body died on the cross, and the soul remained alive. Thus, concerning His Humanity, Saint Peter wrote, "...*being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit*" (1Pt 3:18). The incarnate Logos could die in the flesh, while neither His human soul nor His divine nature die, since both are immortal.

### **How Can God be Put in a Grave:**

Others ask, 'How can God be put in a grave? Who was managing the world during that time?' The answer is that it was the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, united to His divinity, which was put in the grave, but simultaneously He was omnipresent according to His divinity.

Still others ask, 'How can He direct the entire world while in the womb of Saint Mary?' For an answer we give the following illustration: your television generates a picture because there is a power of transmission. This transmission fills the whole atmosphere around the world, so that anyone in any other county can watch the same thing at the same details, incidents, colors, and words, in spite of the remoteness.

When the Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate in the womb of Virgin Mary, a complete unity between the divinity and humanity took place, yet simultaneously, He was omnipresent according to His divinity. If it is normal for a TV to transmit anywhere in the world, how can we feel it strange that the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ occupies the entire world while incarnate in the womb of Virgin Mary in an unutterable and glorious mystery?

The same applies to His presence in the grave: He is omnipresent according to His divinity. He Himself told Nicodemus, "*No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.*" (Jn 3:13). While the Son of Man was speaking to Nicodemus on earth, He was explaining to him that He was also in heaven at that moment, and that His divinity fills both heaven and earth: because He Himself is the Son of God.

## **How can God become incarnate?**

Some people ask how God can be incarnate? The answer to this is that becoming incarnate is not an evil deed or a sin. God is devoid of sin. It is said about Christ the Lord that He was “*without sin*” (Heb 4:15) and “*holy*” (see Mk 1:24, Lk 1:35, 4:34 Act 4:27 etc.). Everyone confesses that He is the only One without sin. Becoming incarnate is not a sin.

God can never change, as we say in the Saint Basil liturgy, “His humanity was united to his divinity without mingling, confusion or alteration.” Incarnation did not change any attribute of His divinity. The proof is that we say that Christ died according to His humanity, not His divinity. His Divinity continued to be immortal even after the incarnation, in other words no change occurred to His divine nature, therefore, His divine nature did not change.

Consequently, the incarnation is neither a sin nor an alteration introduced to His nature. The purpose of incarnation however was saving humanity and declaring God’s love.

God appeared to Moses in the burning bush in the wilderness. Both Christians and non-Christians accept and confess this incident. He spoke to him and told him that He was God, but Moses only saw a burning bush that was not consumed. This means that God can manifest Himself in different ways. Is it not more valuable and superior to manifest Himself as the savior and redeemer, in order to declare His love for us on the cross, than to manifest in the shape of flames of fire?

The inflamed bush symbolizes the incarnation in the womb of Saint Mary where humanity was not burned due to its unity to the Divinity; similarly it symbolizes the cross, because on the cross the blaze of God’s justice was inflamed. The bush is the cross; hence the scene of the crucifixion reminds us of the scene that Moses saw in the wilderness.

Now, we understand that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God Who became incarnate for our salvation in order to redeem us. He gave us His life so that we can live through it, as Saint Paul the apostle says, “*He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.*” (2Cor 5:15) So, do we live and realize that we are not for our desires and ourselves but for Christ who bought us with His precious blood. May the Lord make these words a cause of blessing and salvation for the hearers.

*Glory to God forever, Amen.*