

8th Sunday after Pentecost
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30th July 2017

Look at the world around you! What can you learn? It used to be the view of thinkers in western Christianity that they could use God to explain all natural phenomena. Why is the human hand such a wonder of biological engineering? Because God designed it that way. Why is the giraffe's neck so long? It was made like that in order that it might feed from the highest branches.

Yet as the understanding of the cosmos expanded, as the biological sciences developed, the role of their idea of God was diminished, as the sciences pushed Him to occupy merely the gaps of their ignorance. So God has become smaller for them. Now, for them, the arrogance that comes from too much learning, without humility, has largely dispensed with God as *unnecessary*.

This, though, must not be our experience as Orthodox Christians, in fact, properly speaking, it never has been, for we have always started from a different perspective. It cannot be repeated too often that, when we look about us, the idea of God does not *explain* the world, the cosmos: rather, it is the cosmos that *explains*, or better still, reveals the glory of God.

As physical beings it is true that the stuff of which we are made from comes from the stars. To the post-modern, godless mind it might appear that we are here through an haphazard trail of events, a series of fortuitous accidents: as if the atoms that exist wander at random, forming and reforming objects that appear and dissolve; a meaningless chaos in the pointlessness of existences.

And yet, look at the world around you! There is something else going on here. The odd thing is that our sciences teach us, for example, that gravitational force is *constant*. If it was greater, then those stars from which our own dust comes would be too hot; they would burn up swiftly and unevenly. If gravitational force were too weak, the stars

would be too cool; there would be no nuclear fusion, no production of heavy elements. It is that perfect *constancy* that holds us together. What a wonder! Without it there would be no intelligent life in the cosmos; we would not be here, seeking answers to these questions.

Whether a universe or multiverses, it matters not: there is only one rationality. Illogical worlds cannot exist and all things depend upon, rely upon and serve to glorify what underlies them all: the mind of God, the Logos, the cosmic Christ who is in all things.

Look at the world around you! What can you learn? Not that we should *use* God to explain creation but that we should use the creation to learn the mind of God. And one thing is certain: that nothing in creation is ever purposeless, all is re-cycled, nothing goes to waste. In the knotted chains of events, since the beginning, all things pass on to other things. Nothing in the love of God is ever wasted.

Imagine that you had been there through that long day, sitting on the sunbaked soil upon spiky grass, listening to the Teacher. The sun is heading fast towards that western horizon and you are far from home and hungry. Who had the forethought to bring food? Who would have thought that you would have stayed so long that day compelled and fascinated by the teaching? But your body is also compelled by its need for energy – you, an organism of a particular species amongst another five thousand of your own kind, need feeding. But five loaves and two dried or smoked samples of some species of fish? Surely pointless; a drop in the ocean! Yet nothing in the love of God goes to waste. And suddenly, your plight is resolved and the problem solved: you have food and more than enough: an abundance, just like your ancestors in the wilderness with Moses. So, look at the world around you! What can you learn? That this teacher is clearly the new Moses, the promised Messiah.

Although it seem that we might be just the victims of circumstance, pushed around by forces over which we have little control, our faith teaches us that God does nothing without purpose, without an end in

sight. Though in the midst of the whirlpool of life, it might seem that the random, the vague, the chaotic, is king, in reality - in the mind of God - all things serve to glorify Him.

Some time before, alone in the wilderness, that same teacher, the hidden Christ, recently revealed at His baptism in the Jordan, had stared at smooth, wind-blasted stones, lying in the sands of the desert and the devil (with his own purposes in mind) had suggested that these might, contrary to all natural laws, become bread. But who, when his child asks for bread will give him a stone? God does nothing without a purpose and certainly nothing to satisfy the devil's sarcastic taunting; no more than He will obey the cynical demands for proof that come from unbelief: those who would put God to the test; those people around you who say, show me God and I will believe in Him.

Look at the world around you! What can you see? The same sign, the same wonder is worked among us today, yet as it were, in reverse. There, Christ wasted nothing of that little food the apostles had but with the purpose, the motive of feeding many, the atoms were multiplied, called, summoned - by the Divine will - into existence, to feed the hungry with good things.

Then and there, it was Christ who gave the bread to all. And Here? It is the bread that brings Christ to those who receive Him. No matter how many among the Orthodox, each receives the fullness, the whole Christ. No wonder that, just like the apostles gathering up the twelve baskets of the fallen crumbs, so even the particles that fall upon the Antimension cloth on the holy table are gathered together and consumed. Nothing in the love of God is ever allowed to be wasted. Even the blessed bread of the antidoron, from which the Holy Lamb itself is cut, we handle and consume with care.

Let us look around us and learn diligently. Whatever we offer to God is consecrated, not to teach us fussiness or to divide the world into pure and impure but that we might see the potential of all things, until

the Final Judgement; that all things, all creation can be redeemed. There are, indeed, many things and many souls that will be condemned but not now, not yet. There are plenty of siren voices around us in these times in which we live, wanting us to bless what God has not blessed, purporting to say that God has a purpose here, where in truth he has none. (Let the listener/reader understand!) As ever, the devil is about with his temptations, masquerading as an angel of light.

God does nothing without a purpose but from the beginning His purposes are His own. And his intention in receiving us, the assembly of the Orthodox, this morning and in committing to us the Holy Gifts is not to waste Himself. God does not ask for bits and pieces of our life but in return, in this New Covenant, all of us, the whole of what we are, should be committed unto Him. No matter how small, how insignificant the things we have to offer, like the five little loaves and two small fish, Christ still commands us, as he commanded His apostles, "Bring them here to Me."