

## Miracles and Miracles

The world asks for miracles in order to believe, in other words, extraordinary events that exceed the Law of Nature, defeat it, and astonish reason. For example, there is a sick person. He suffers from an incurable disease. No medicine can cure him. He goes toward death with mathematical certainty. The doctors, who know the stages of this incurable illness, foretell that his life will last only a few days or even hours. If the patient is now taken to some holy shrine, and his relatives and friends beg the Lord with unshakable faith, and the sick person is completely cured, who can doubt that a miracle has happened, that divine intervention has taken place which has restored the patient's health. And the doctors who attended the sick man and were in despair, if they were now called and examined the man, they would be astonished at how the symptoms of that deadly disease had disappeared and he had become well.

A sick person who is cured in this way, a blind man who without medicines but through the invocation of the Lord's name receives his sight, a paralytic who strongly asks God's mercy, gets up from his bed and walks, a demoniac who is cured by the prayers and supplications of his kinfolk, are these not astonishing events? The news that this kind of miracle has taken place somewhere stirs up the conscience and many people run to venerate at the places where miracles have taken place. There are holy shrines in our country which are famous for the miracles that take place there because of the intervention of saints, and great numbers of people come to them at their feast days, even from distant places. And they conduct vigil services, and wait to witness a miracle. And they will not leave unless they see a miracle!

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But are there not other miracles besides these, which the Blessed Lord performs in every generation through His chosen servants, the Saints? Is the meaning of the word miracle restricted only to the cures of people with incurable diseases? Certainly not! There are other kinds of miracles which are not as impressive as the above. They do not abruptly affect the senses of hearing and vision, they do not arouse the curiosity of the multitude. They are, however, miracles. Miracles which do not affect the material elements of a man's body. They do not contravene natural law but take place in the spiritual world, defeating the corrupt nature in everyone, the evils and the passions which are psychological illnesses far worse than the physical one. And they elevate man to a higher plane of life. To distinguish them from the first kind of miracles, let us call them the miracles of the souls and of the spiritual nature of man, moral miracles. And these, as this talk will show, are the most important and beneficial miracles. Let us begin with the lesser ones. Here is a couple. They are not rich. They do not live in a mansion. They live in a poor home, a hut. They are not angels, they are human. The man and the woman have faults and are of different personality types which in other couples would cause a storm of domestic quarrels. But accord prevails with this couple which not only unites their bodies but their souls as well. They pray together, they study the Word of God together, they put a great deal of effort into their personal edification. They have been married twenty years. They have encountered many sorrows and temptations in their life together but the fire of their love is not extinguished. The secret of this love is Christ. From His love they also draw their strength, to love each other and to live in harmony.

In the midst of thousands of unfortunate couples who are fighting, whose disputes are talked about everywhere, and not infrequently end up in court, in the midst of so many everyday domestic dramas, divorces, and pitiful disasters, is not a couple whose love is inextinguishable for two or three decades a miracle I ask?

That hovel that has love is a Church of Christ.

We leave that hovel where the spouses live the miracle of Christ's love and go to a monastic or missionary brotherhood. Is it a small thing that twenty or thirty people from different places and families come together and maintain a miraculous unity in spite of their differences in origin, education, character, and family background? A pilgrim who knows what animosity reigns today in the world, which is so bad that even blood relatives hate each other bitterly and fight in the courts over property, when he visits a monastery and sees the equity that reigns in that holy institution, he cannot do other than admire it and say: Christ lives here! The love that reigns in a monastic brotherhood is a miracle that the grace of the Lord performs. It does not matter that the monks do not perform miracles as the ascetics did in the past. It does not matter that they do not perform some other missionary activity in the world worthy of notice. Let them however have love, not that false and hypocritical one, but that genuine, sincere Christian love, and if this love of theirs exists in preaches far louder to the world than all miracles and more eloquently than all teachings.

That love that unites the brothers and makes a spiritual family out of them is a miracle, a miracle far greater than the healing of the sick. And we are not the ones who say this. One of the most illustrious representatives of the monastic life and conduct, St. Theodore of Studium, preaches this. Let us listen as to how he characterizes this love: "Perhaps one thinks that being holy and having miraculous powers that expel demons, cure the blind, cleanse lepers, raise the dead, affect nature, move mountains, turn the seas into land, or do things like these, are great miracles and wonders. I, however, do not think that this is as miraculous as is this: That people from different places and lands, different races, languages, and ages come together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and become united and joined as one multi-souled, multi-hearted body of one mind and heart, not to do evil but the will of God, and veneration and worship of the Holy Trinity, which no one, no man, no ruler, no authority, no king, not even the champion of the demons himself, has the power and strength to overcome." Truly! A true monastic brotherhood which has the love of Christ, in which "This is mine and this is yours," is not heard, is one of the greatest miracles of divine grace, which defeats the selfishness and self-interest of man. Unfortunately, this kind of love is missing in most of today's monasteries, and this lack is the greatest cause of the degeneration of monastic life. But let us put aside monastic brotherhoods and go back again to the world. Here is a small village in our country where the demon of discord has not entered. The few families that live there have cultivated the little soil given them. A pious priest teaches the small flock that love is priceless wealth, the blessing of heaven. And the people abide in this love. They do not wrong their neighbors. They do not have anything to do with the courts. They do not need watchmen to watch over their fields. They participate in the grief and sorrow as well as the joy of each other's families. Is there such a village in Greece you might ask? It sounds impossible. Utopia. However, whenever there is a humble, instructive priest of the Most High who cultivates

the souls of simple people, this beautiful image of love and harmony appears. And this village in which love reigns in all the relations of its people constitutes a good example. In the midst of other villages, communities, and municipalities that cannot even have a peaceful meeting, whose community or municipal boards continuously fight over even the least of matters, waste precious time, and do not do anything profitable, in the midst of immeasurable hatred this village is an oasis in a scorching desert. It is a miracle village that proclaims that people living together become happy when the heavenly plant of love is cultivated in the hearts of men.

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Beloved! As we wrote at the beginning of this present article, when it is heard that a miracle has taken place somewhere, people run there. Some years ago, upon hearing that the icon of the Mother of God at a country chapel was crying, the inhabitants of about twenty villages... left their jobs and, men and women, walked a long way to that country chapel and there celebrated liturgies and vigils... and in the end? It turned out that the miracle was a great hoax... How much more would they have benefited spiritually, if they had wanted to hear the voice of Christ, which is calling us to perform the greatest miracle in our lives! And His voice is summed up in the only three words: LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

What good is it, beloved, if we see miracles, while in our hearts we nourish the wild beasts of envy, hatred, and every other evil? What did it gain the evil and envious Jews, if I may ask, who saw the greatest of miracles during the time of Christ, who saw Lazarus resurrected from the grave, and yet in a few days, in spite of this, senselessly committed the greatest of crimes, crucifying the Benefactor of All? Do we want to see a miracle? The Lord is close to us. Let us, those of us who call ourselves Christians, try to cash in the gold coins of the commandment of Christ: Love one another, and convert it into good works. And then our earth will see the greatest of miracles, it will see a new society. And before this great miracle, even the most incredulous in this world will be forced to recognize that on Religion, which has the power to defeat the strongest of passions and transform people into the most beneficial of beings, is divine in origin. The Lord told us this: "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)

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