



# I Defy You O' Death!



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# **I Defy You O' Death!**



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### **A PLEASING GIFT!**

Whenever I came across a story of death through my writings or at a funeral of one of the beloved, I feel a deep desire to taste the splendor of death and the transition to the Paradise that God has prepared for us.

I remember when my book *“The gift of Death”* was ready for printing; H.G. Bishop Dioscoros asked me, saying: “why don’t you change the title of the book? I responded; “These are my true feelings; that death is a heavenly gift, which I long to enjoy.”

Once at a funeral of a young lady in her thirties, and as the traditions of Upper Egypt for funerals to last 3 days; one dear Muslim said to his Christian friend: “Abouna talks about death as if it is an enjoyable bar of chocolate.” His friend then responded that is how we (Christians) feel about death.

### **THE MYSTERY OF ITS SPLENDOR!**

The mystery of death is in the beauty of the transition to meet our Beloved Jesus; whom we see now through faith; however through death we’ll see Him face to face. Jeremiah contemplated upon His beloved Lord and sang: **“The Lord is my portion says my soul” (Lamentation 3:24)** and the psalmist also said “I am continually with you; You hold me by my right hand; You will guide me with Your Council and afterward you’ll receive me to the glory. **Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon the earth that I desire besides You.” My flesh and my heart fail. But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. (Ps. 73:23-26)**

After St. Paul met with the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ who resides the Heavens, he was no longer concerned with whether to live in the world or pass towards the age to come. All that occupied him was the meeting with His Beloved Jesus who scarified His life to save him. In turn the apostle Paul desired to hold on to His Savior wherever He is found, saying” **For if we live, we live to the Lord and if we die, we die to the Lord and if we live or die we are the Lord’s” (Roman 14:8)**

### **CONGRATULATIONS FOR THE PASSING!**

Years ago on my way to Egypt from Australia, I was transiting in Los Angeles, where there was a funeral of the departed Philip. He was known for his purity and simplicity. In my speech I said: “I could say “Congratulations for the Passing,” for I truly felt that Phillip left us to be at a joyous party or as if to join his wedding ceremony.

With that his sister in law (the wife of Dr. Fahmy Atalla) was quite moved and sent me a note, saying; that she was moved when she heard **“Congratulations”** for the first time, said at a funeral. She said that her views on death have totally changed, and now she looks upon it as a **joyful crossing**.

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It was told of a young girl asking her mother about her departed father saying;

**Girl:** Where did Dad go?

**Mother:** He went to our Lord Jesus.

**Girl:** Will he ever come back?

**Mother:** No; but we will go to him when our Lord Jesus calls us to go.

The young girl was pleased with the answer.

Two days later the mother gets a visit from a friend who came to give her condolences. At that time the girl's mother cried describing how sorrowful she is for losing her husband. Hearing the mother crying and saying that 'she lost her husband,' the young girl questioned her mother saying: "If ever you lose something, then you find its place, would you still consider it as lost?" Her mom replied: "No my dear;" then the girl said: "You told me that my Dad went to our Lord Jesus, so how could you say that you lost him?" The crying mother smiled and tried to correct her statement.

That story reminds me of what St. John Chrysostom said when attending a funeral at a church. He found many people crying and being too sad; then he said "I'm surprised at what I see here; is our faith only in words? How is it that we desire heaven and whenever our relatives pass onto a new life in heaven we cry and be sad?"

**O' Lord grant me that I may trust in Your Presence,  
And see Your open arms awaiting me;  
As I run joyfully to You.  
Whenever a soul has departed to You,  
My heart inflames within me longing for You,  
Saying, "May The Lord who sustained You sustain me!"**



## I Defy You O' Death!

### WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY DO?

At the time of St. Basil, the Archbishop of Caesarea, the emperor tried to threaten him thinking that he could terrify him. He couldn't shake St. Basil's inner peace nor erase his outer smile. St. Basil said to him,

What could you possibly do to me?

If you imprisoned me, it is rather indulging compared to my monastic cell.

If you torture me, I would consider it a gift in partaking in the suffering of Christ and cherish the power of His resurrection.

If you kill me, I would consider it a fulfillment of my deepest desire to depart to my Christ whom I long to see face to face.

The same thing happened with St. John Chrysostom in facing the persecution of the Empress.

❖ What could frighten me? Death is not at all fearsome to me, for through it, we'll reach to the safe harbor.

**St. John Chrysostom**

The soul that enjoys its engagement to Christ the King, rushes to the day of her wedding, defying death. Not that man thinks he would skip death, but he desires it as his joyous wedding day. Therefore, the wicked ones are terrified of death, while the righteous ones are rejoicing at its coming.

❖ If we wish not to fear death, we should be where Jesus is, that He may say about us "But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death." (Luke 9:27)

Those who reached the truth of the fellowship with Christ will never see death. They will only taste the death of the flesh, but the spirit lives on.

❖ We must keep our ears open to Jesus' voice; "Whoever listens attentively will not fear death."

**St. Ambrose**

**St. Cyprian** had once said to the people at a time of a deadly epidemic,

[Now, the Heavenly matters are prepared to take over the earthly ones, the greater things instead of the trivial things and the immortal in place of the mortal. Therefore; there is no need for worries or fear.

If you are righteous, then you live by faith... Getting yourself distant from Satan while getting closer to live with Jesus in Paradise generates joy. Through death we reach the harbor of our heavenly home, the eternal rest and we win immortality.

❖ Most assuredly, he who fears death is not born of the water and the Spirit, and will end in Hades.



He who fears death hasn't experienced the cross of Christ nor His sufferings

He who fears death is the one who awaits the second death.

- ❖ Why do we pray: "Thy will be done," if being captives in this world pleases us?!
- ❖ He who attains the throne of Christ and the glory of the kingdom of Heaven, shouldn't be mourning or crying, but rather happy for his departure from this world, according to Christ's promise and his faith in the Truth.

**St. Cyprian**

- ❖ We must not fear death, but rather fear the perishing of the soul, that is the lack of the knowledge of God; this is what truly frightens the soul.

**St. Anthony the Great**

- ❖ This is my hope as I'm longing for the Lord; that I would rather be at this hour of departure, without the help of humans; with no one around to close my eyes except for God, and be found fallen on my face as I have been contemplating on Him. That is my deepest desire.

**St. John Saba**

- ❖ Those who live in pleasures fear death, but those who are grieving, are hoping for a fast departure.

**St. Aphrahat**

### **I WILL NEVER DIE!**

Once a righteous woman came to me, saying that there was a man who enticed her to leave her husband and her family. He deceived her with empty promises of a life full of happiness. He persuaded her that she meant everything to him and that he will marry her at any cost.

Sadly enough, after she had left everything behind for him, she discovered that he leads a life of sin. At times when she confronted him, he would say such is life and would humiliate her as if she is ignorant or idiot. Whenever she talked about his eternal life, he would assure her, saying: "**I will never die,**" and constantly repeat that.

The fact that he repeated such a statement reflects his inner fear from death. Death to him is to be deprived of satisfying all his carnal desires, which for him, is a deprivation from life itself.

### **AS IF HE DIED TODAY!**

It was told about Lenin the leader of the Communist Revolution (which attacks the faith in God and denies the age to come, and the heavenly beings that he wrote multiple references about different subjects and often avoided talking about death. In all his references he wouldn't point out death except two times, and very briefly. It was not possible for him to face death, for it



represented a total devastation to his life and to all his efforts. Ten years after his son died, he confided in one of his friends saying that he feels **as if he died today**, and that he finds no consolation.

Death that generates joy in the life of a true believer is destructive to the life of an unbeliever and a source of frustration. That's why he doesn't want to vanish.

### **I WILL NOT RECEIVE THE COMMUNION**

Earlier in my service of priesthood, I went to visit a person at home, who suffered from terminal ascites, among multiple other illnesses. The doctor concluded at the hospital that his days were numbered. I then spoke to him about the fellowship with Christ and asked him to think about his eternal life and about receiving Communion. He couldn't think of anything besides the desire not to die.

**He said to me: "I will not receive the Communion for my father had taken Communion then died, and I don't want to die."**

**I tried repeatedly with him; and I was saddened about his rejection to enter into a joyful fellowship with God. He died shortly after.**

In the same week, while I was still feeling bitter about his departure, I went to visit a lady who was dying to Cancer. When I came to the door her daughter seemed shocked when she saw me. I asked her about the reason, she said that about a half hour ago, her sick mother, who was in coma and unable to speak for a long time, told her to go open the door, for Fr. Tadros is here. When I entered her room, her face was lit up and she was filled with joy when she spoke with me, which surprised her attending physician. Finally; she joyfully asked me, if she could receive the Holy Communion before she dies. The next day I gave her the Holy Communion and before I could leave her house, the daughter announced that her mother had passed away. She had happily departed to her heavenly wedding.

### **THE SHADOW OF DEATH**

While the father stood with his two children, waiting to be picked up by a friend to go to his wife's funeral, he didn't know what to say or how to comfort his two young children, who just lost their mother. Being distressed and unsettled in his mind, a bulldozer happened to be passing by. It shook the ground and the house on it, while casting a big shadow on the man and his two kids, as it was a sunny day.

The man said to his children: Did you see this bulldozer?

The older son: "yes we did, and it cast such a big shadow on us. It is scary to feel its motion shaking the ground under us.

The father: "Truly it is a startling and disturbing sound. What do you think will happen if this bulldozer went over someone?"



The younger Son: "It will destroy him completely."

The father: "what happened when its shadow passed by us?"

The older Son: "Nothing at all had happened, Dad."

At this moment the father thought to say; hearing about death is truly scary and disturbing and its destruction has been in the world for generations, however we thank God that our Lord Jesus; the Lover of mankind, has trampled on death by His death, as if He Himself, was steering the bulldozer of death.

He died as all humans did, but it was impossible for death to destroy Him. He rode the bulldozer Himself that it may not destroy us, rather it made only a shadow of death to pass by us. Therefore we don't fear it "**Yea, though I walk through the valley of shadow of death I will not fear no evil for You are with me (Ps. 23:4)**". Notice that it didn't mention "it's the valley of death but only the shadow of it."

The younger Son: "But Mom has died, Dad! Did death destroy her?"

The father: "It can never destroy her; she only passed through the shadow of it to be with our Lord Jesus, and to live in Paradise with all the other believers who happily passed onto a new Life.

- ❖ I thank you my dear Savior for You have not trusted an Angel or an Archangel, a Seraphim or Cherubim, nor a prophet or a righteous Person to steer that bulldozer of death!
- ❖ But you came to our world and rode the bulldozer of death Yourself. It didn't pass over me, but only its shadow, for there is no death for Your servants but a departure.
- ❖ Where is your power O' Death?  
Here is my Beloved Jesus steering you away that you may not touch my soul, nor get my body.  
My body finds a temporary rest in you till it receives the perfect rest when it is glorified, and united with the body of Christ.  
I welcome you O' shadow of Death, for through you I cross towards the Lover of my soul.

