

The miracle of three orthodox Saints

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How a cerebrally-dead Greek young man was reanimated!

A contribution to the view of the Church on transplantations

On the paschal Tuesday of 17th May 2000, his Eminence the Metropolitan of Goumenissa, Axioupolis and Polykastron Mr. Demetrios, the local authorities and a multitude of pilgrims gathered at the Holy Monastery of Saints Raphael, Nikolaos and Irene to celebrate the feast of these three New-Revealed Orthodox Saints. Closing his preaching to the congregation, the Metropolitan reported the personal testimony of pilgrims present at the congregation who had made public the outstanding experience of their miraculous healings by the New-Revealed Saints: Mr. Isaac Kapoulas -a policeman from Thessaloniki who had been cured from leukemia, Mrs. Aikaterini Tsotopoulou -a woman also from a suburb of Thessaloniki who had recovered from a severe craniocerebral injury, Mr. Stergios Ledas -a man from nearby Kilkis who had also recovered from heavy head injury and Mr. Zacharias Georgousis from the local village of Vafeiohori who had been saved from an allergic shock. Following the procession of the holy relics of the three saints, the congregation met again to listen to the astounding account by a high-school pupil from the Terpni village in the neighboring area of Nigrita, Serres and his mother. The young man named Apostolos Gazepis narrated his miraculous saving from the injuries of a traffic accident on 5.5.2000 although the doctors had given up every hope for recovery and had therefore tried to persuade his parents to consent for his vital organs to be donated(!). The firm faith of his mother who never stopped praying for eight days to the New-Revealed Saints Raphael, Nikolaos and Irene outside the Intensive Care Unit contributed to the reanimation and full recovery of the patient that also had the honour to see the Saints.

In her signed account of this overwhelming event, Mrs. Sophia Gazepi, mother of Apostolos, describes the tragic days until her son's reanimation. It was on 5th May 2000, the paschal Friday of Mary the Source of Life and St Irene, that her 17-year-old son Apostolos riding a motorbike crashed into a car. He was taken to the local First Aids and then hurried to the General Hospital of Serres. Following a CT-scan of the head, the doctors informed the father that his son had suffered severe craniocerebral injury and, provided they managed to stabilize his cerebral pressure without further complications, there would be hope for reanimation.

On the following day Mrs. Sophia asked for books about the miracles of Saint Raphael and began reading them and praying day and night along with the relatives and neighbours that stood by her side. In those very few moments she was allowed into the Critical Care Unit she crossed her son with the blessed oil from the Saints' church.

The patient was attended by neurosurgeon Mr. Vogas. On the third day, the cerebral pressure rose high, the brain was bleeding and the young man was perishing. In their despair, his parents called for another specialist, although the attending doctor had reassured them that it was no longer a matter of medical care since the patient's condition was deteriorating. Dr. Nikolaos Baskinis was however brought from Thessaloniki, only to confirm the critical condition of the patient, especially regarding the heatomas at the back of his head that made recovery doubtful. There was a faint hope if they operated on him, so the parents gave their consent. The operation revealed more wounds than the CT-scan and because the brain was swollen the doctors decided to leave the skull open and see what would follow. As soon as the neurosurgeons had left, the Hospital doctors announced to the parents that the young man was cerebrally dead. On Friday night, 7 days after the accident, the Brain Death Determination Test was positive. The doctor on duty called the parents asking them to take courage and comfort themselves with their other child because Apostolos was dying since only his heart was beating. The mother was painfully praying to our Lord to bring her son to life as He had done with Lazarus.

All through this time, the parents, relatives, fellow-pupils, friends and acquaintances had been ceaselessly praying for Apostolos. They had talked to the Saints' monasteries on the island of Lesvos and in the nearby location of Griva, asking for a commemoration of the young man's name in the services. On the previous Tuesday, Apostolos's mother had gone to the Church of the Mother of God in the town of Serres to attend the supplication to the three New-Revealed Saints.

On Saturday there was the first evidence of relative improvement: 7 Brain Death Confirmation Tests were positive against 2 negative! By noon, his condition had further improved. Fateful visions seen by close relatives raised their hopes for the substantial assistance of Mother Mary and the New-Revealed Saints. After 13th May 2000, Apostolos started to recover. The neurosurgeon asked them to call him 'Lazarus' after that, because he had actually been 'risen' from death.

The medical report written by the neurosurgeon Dr. Evaggelos Vogas stated: "... During his CT-exam, the patient needed intubation because of his comatose condition. The findings of the CT-scan were the following: fracture of left occipital bone with an underlying contusion of the left hemisphere of the cerebellum; extensive haemorrhagic contusions on the right frontal lobe with an ipsilateral fine subdural heatoma; a dislocation of the median line to the left; and the receptacles of the cerebral base were closed ... On the evening hours of 8.5.2000 his Intracranial Pressure raises, which is very difficult to control ... On 9.5.2000 the patient is taken to OR for craniotomy and partial removal of contused right frontal lobe. At the end of

the operation, the brain is pulsating, the subdural area is left open, while the pupils are in dilation with no reaction to light stimuli... On 12.5.2000 all Brain Death Determination Tests are positive. On 13.5.2000 pupillary dilation returns and reaction to light is evident. Progressively until 16.5.2000 the patient starts breathing on his own ...”

When Apostolos recovered, he had a problem with his left arm because of multiple injuries and the procedures during his intensive therapy. Among the many doctors he visited, Dr. Ilias Tsorlinis (of the Neurophysiology Laboratory) diagnosed ‘diffuse degeneration of the ulnar nerve on the left forearm, below the level of the branch projection for the ulnar flexor of the wrist, with no focal conduction block.’

One night Apostolos himself saw Saint Deacon Nikolaos in his vision talking to his father: ‘You have gone to so many doctors; why haven’t you come to me too?’ His father answered: ‘How are you going to heal this?’ and the Saint replied: ‘You know how!’ In a second vision, Apostolos found himself in a chapel with icons and a table in the centre with the decapitated head of Saint Raphael. As he hesitated to approach the table, the Saint appeared in full form before him and told him how many times he had attended church lately, then grasped his arm, recited a prayer and at this touch Apostolos’s arm was illuminated. His arm recovered fully in a short time!

In the Life of Saint Symeon the New Theologian (written by Saint Nikitas Stithatos) we read: “The real visions remain in the mind for many years later, even until the end of life, as these had originally been revealed. Saint Gregory the Theologian testifies to that in his speech to Caisarios ... And when he saw something related to his ill mother, the outcome proved that the vision had been real”.

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