
The Theatre of the World

The theatre of martyrdom

A great theatre is filled with spectators to watch your contests and your summons to martyrdom, just as if we were to speak of a great crowd gathered to watch the contests of athletes supposed to be champions. And no less than Paul you will say when you enter the contest, “We have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men” (1 Cor. 4:9). Thus, the whole world and all the angels of the right and the left, and all men, those from God’s portion (cf. Deut. 32:9; Col. 1:12) and those from the other portions, will attend to us when we contest for Christianity.¹

“And forgive us our sins, as we forgive our debtors”

And if we are in a theatre of the world both of angels and of men, we must know that, just as the person in a theatre is a debtor to say or to do certain things in the view of the spectators and if he fails to do them is punished for having insulted the whole theatre, so also we are debtors to the whole world, both to all the angels and to the human race, for those things that we shall learn from Wisdom if we are willing.²

The place of communal prayer possess grace – a “double church”

And a place of prayer, the spot where believers assemble together, is likely to have something gracious to help us, since angelic powers are placed near the throngs of believers, as well as the powers of our Lord and Saviour Himself, and the spirits of the saints - I think both of those who have already fallen asleep and clearly of those who are still alive, even though it is not easy to say how ... As a result, when the saints are gathered together, there is a double Church, one of men and the other of angels ... Therefore, let no one disdain prayers in the churches, since they have something exceptional for the person who assembles in them genuinely.³

Assistance from our “neighbours”, the saints

One of the most supreme virtues according to the divine Word is the love of neighbour. And we must suppose that it is far more present in the saints who have already fallen asleep toward those struggling in life than in those who are still in human weakness and struggle alongside their inferiors. For it is not only here below that there applies to those who love the brethren the saying ‘If one member suffers, all the members suffer together; and if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice together’ (1 Cor. 12:26).⁴

¹ *An Exhortation to Martyrdom* 18 (pp.53-4)

² *On Prayer* 28.3 (p.148)

³ *On Prayer* 31.5 (pp.166-7)

⁴ *On Prayer* 11.2 (p.102)