

7 Μαΐου 2017

The Sun of God: Christ is Triumphant! (Joseph Magnus Frangipani)

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Khufu ship

In researching a little history today, I came across the ancient Egyptian phenomenon known as 'sun boats.' Probably the most famous, and by far most interesting, is the solar barge known as the *Khufu ship*, a wooden ritual vessel

found sealed into a pit at the base of one of the pyramids.

The *Khufu ship* served to carry the 'resurrected' King Cheops through the afterlife and is constructed from Lebanon cedar planking using tenons of Jerusalem thorn. Another name for the Jerusalem thorn is *paliurus spina-christi*, or Christ's thorn and I find this intriguing and very beautiful.

Christ and His Church are the 'sun boat' of man, calming the storms of our passions, guiding us from the shores of this life through death and sin toward Eternal Life in God our Father.

The Church serves as an ark, as a redemptive and life-creating vessel in which the world is saved by the flood of temptations.

While the wood of the Egyptians remains dead in museums, the wood of the true and holy cross upon which our Lord conquered death glorifies and resurrects through the grace of our Father in the Eucharist.

It is springtime here in Alaska, and snow melts off rooftops, window frames and fence posts. Eagles circle Kachemak Bay and out in the beyond glaciers glisten and smooth like slow, blue tongues between mountains and volcano.

While reading about the *Khufu ship* and its construction from cedar and Jerusalem thorns, I found that the Greek historian Plutarch, who lived between 46 and 120 AD, noted that a Greek wedding custom crowns the bride with a wreath of fine, perfumed acanthus, - - or again, Christ's thorns (hopefully still young, and not prickly) - - but the Greek custom symbolizes the need for the groom to be patient with his bride, just as we must be patient and humble before the Will of God.

We cannot achieve salvation in any way other than by transforming our mind, writes Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica. Our minds become deified by a special act of God's Grace, they become passionless - dead to gold, dead to riches and kingdoms on earth. A deified mind is one which lives in remembrance of God at all times, and knowing that God is in us and we in Him, like fish in water when we are in God, our hearts can be with Him, and Him in us.

According to Elder Thaddeus, the mind, heart and will are usually divided. This is the most common source of our problems and afflictions. However, those who have been enlightened by God, the mind, heart and will are united, and the light they have been given is not only the visible, physical light that they radiate, but a much deeper and permanent inner light whose abode is the person's heart. This light is love, and it is only with love that we can truly draw near to God, Who is pure Love. Our growth, continues the Elder, and our journey toward God is eternal, for God is

indescribable, ineffable, and uncontainable. However, it is through love that we are closest to Him.

It's easy to intellectualize and rationalize salvation, and redemption, and it's easier still to throw it all overboard, to give up entirely and live on the other end of the boat. But one or the other side and the vessel is crooked, and running back and forth stirs it too much, and our minds become seasick.

So it is not through the earthen, heavy, and sluggish desires and snares of the world that we find Eternal Life, nor is it up in the air with the birds like a tree, we should probably have our roots in the ground and our leaves and branches aimed high toward the sun.

If we allow our actions to be devoid of Christ's love, if they remain purely rational, then perhaps we risk becoming *Khufu ships* ourselves. Impotent, wooden artifacts buried in a barren desert rather than what we are created to be: glorified icons of our Lord, beacons of light, suns of God through the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

By Joseph Magnus Frangipani

This article was originally posted on March 20, 2010 on [Servant of Prayer](#) and is posted here with permission.