

The Winding-Sheet: Love unto Death (Fr. Andreas Agathokleous)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



We all need to be loved and to have this love demonstrated, in word and deed, because we were created from love and we're kept alive by it. When we feel loved, we dare to attempt difficult tasks, to continue on our path, to endure trials.

If even human love has such power, how much more so has God's love for us. Because our God, the God of our Fathers, loves us enormously, limitlessly. He showed it by sharing our human existence, our pain and death. As Metropolitan Anthony Bloom put it, Hell is a condition, it's the deprivation and loss of God. This is apparent from Christ's cry on the Cross: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (*Matth. 27, 46*). This is the experience of not only being abandoned by God, but of being deprived of Him. And God's willingness to share our loss of Him means His descent into Hell.



The Winding-Sheet, which we venerate every Great Friday, shows how Christ, as God and human being, shared our life and death. This is the support for everyone in pain, everyone in despair, everyone in sin, in the certainty that they're not alone.

Christ's love for each and everyone of us, which led to His death, is the only certainty, the only given that can make:

- the sinner repent
- the despairing hope
- the stressed be calm
- the sad rejoice
- the suffering endure
- the mourning find peace

However true the Winding-Sheet and the above remarks are, though, unless God's love is felt dynamically in the heart, they'll be empty words. But a love that enters a humble and contrite heart, not one that's hard and selfish...

In the turmoil of our problems, in the confused state of the world within us and around us, in whatever pain and disappointment we experience, may our coming to, touching and venerating the Winding-Sheet be an expression of our desire to enjoy God's love and to respond to its call.

'Lord Jesus Christ, crucified Love that descended into Hell, come into our turbulent

life, into our darkness, into our hardened hearts and snatch us away into Your Light, so that we can feel Your love and can love You in return. Loving You, may we love Your children and our brothers and sisters, those near and far, sharing, as You did with us, the path, the portion and the sacrifice. Amen'.