

12. Visio Dei: Our Journey Home

Jesus says He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). He shows us the way to the Father and divinizes our humanity. The Church is the pilgrim people of God. He guides us, protects us, and nourishes us. As St. Athanasius reminds us, "God became man so that man might become divine." This process of theosis, or divinization, takes place during our lifetime and beyond through a process of purgation, illumination, and transforming union. The threefold-way, as it is called, is not a linear, but an upward spiraling movement of constant change. The journey home is a never-ending adventure into the mystery of God's love that moves from one reality into an even deeper one, and an even deeper one, and so on, for all eternity.

I. Introduction: In considering the process of theosis, it can be helpful to call to mind the image of a Journey. Keeping Our Destination in Sight; Paroikia: "Strangers in a Foreign Land" Our Ultimate End; To Be Single-Hearted; To Focus on the One Thing That Matters; To Focus on God

Christ Leads Us Home. We Cannot Make This Journey on Our Own; We Need Help; Christ Has Come to Help Us; Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37); Telling of the Parable; Interpretation of Origen; Christ Leads Us Home: "I Am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." (John 14:6); He Guides Us; He Protects Us (iii) He Nourishes Us

The Pilgrim Church: The Church Is the Body of Christ. Christ Is Living His Paschal Mystery in the Members of His Body. The Body of Christ Is the New Man. Our Destination: The Objective: God - The Mystery of the Trinity; The Visio Dei: Seeing God Face-to-Face

II. The Christian Journey: Now we will look at The Threefold Way (Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, 1980. pp. 177-207)

The Purgative Way: The Way of Detachment, Living the Commandments

- The External Senses: Detachment and Moderation
- The Internal Senses: Memory and Imagination
- The Passions: Irascible and Concupiscible Appetites
- The Intellect: Speculative and Practical
- The Will: Rational Appetite

The Illuminative Way: The Way of Knowledge, Living the Virtues, Being and Doing, We Have an Instinctive Knowledge of the Good. Faith – Hope - Love
Prudence – Justice – Fortitude - Temperance

3. The Unitive Way: The Way of Union, Living in the Spirit

- The Gift of Wisdom
- The Gift of Understanding
- The Gift of Counsel
- The Gift of Knowledge
- The Gift of Fortitude
- The Gift of Piety
- The Gift of Fear of the Lord

The Image of a Spiral: The Call to Conversion (Metanoia); The Constant Need for Conversion; The Threefold Way of Purgation, Illumination, and Union Eventually Converges into One. Dynamic Rest.

III. Conclusion: The Good Life; The Good Life is to be on the Journey to God -A Never Ending Journey; Gregory of Nyssa: Epektasis: Means "Constant Progress" The Infinite God Is Inexhaustible; The Perpetual Ascent of the Soul; The Perpetual Transformation of the Person

C.S. Lewis: The Last Battle (Chronicles of Narnia); Moving from one reality to a Deeper Reality; "I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now...Come further up, come further in!" (C.S. Lewis, The Last Battle, The Chronicles of Narnia, 1956, ch. 15)

Heaven for Us: To Participate in the Eternal Dance of God's Love; This World: The Already-But-Not-Yet; The Next World: Our Journey Ends, But In a Sense Never Ends; God Has Created Us for Happiness; Happiness for Us is to Rest in the Never-Ending Journey into the Divine Mystery. Heaven for Us is to Journey into the Infinite Mystery of Divine Love. We Discover that All Loves Converge in God; Storge, Eros, Philia, Agape; God is Father, Mother, Lover, Friend, Spouse, Brother, Sister - and So Much More! We Discover that We Are Not Only Healed of Our Wounded Natures, but Transformed. We Are Divinized (Theosis), True Sons and Daughters of God!

Review Questions

1. What is heaven like for God? In what sense are you a stranger in a foreign land?
2. What does the threefold-way of purgation, illumination, and union have to do with the Good Life?
3. In what sense are all the loves united in God? In what sense is the journey into the mystery of God's love never ending?