

Inquirer's Class - Lesson #3

The Sacraments

-As we discussed last time, union with Christ is possible. Salvation is our real union with Christ through grace. We have been saved in order to be "partakers of the Divine Nature." We put on Christ and become transformed by grace into His image and likeness.

-We discussed that this participation takes place primarily in the Church which we call our "life in Christ."

"Christ's humanity, (by virtue of the incarnation), is penetrated with divine 'energy.' It is, therefore, a deified humanity, which, however, does not in any way lose its human characteristics. Quite the contrary. These characteristics become even more real and authentic by contact with the divine model according to which they were created. In this deified humanity of Christ's, man is called to participate, and to share in its deification. This is the meaning of sacramental life and the basis of Christian spirituality. The Christian is called not to an 'imitation' of Jesus - a purely extrinsic and moral act - but, as Nicholas Cabasilas puts it, to 'life in Christ' through baptism,

chrismation, and the Eucharist." -Fr. John Meyendorff

"Our task now is not to earn this new life but to live it, to enter into the riches of Christ's redemptive work and to allow the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection to enter into our daily lives; for when the Lord Jesus took His seat at the right hand of the Father, He poured out His Spirit on His Church, the Spirit whose mission it is to make available to all believers the salvation Christ has won for us." -Pope St. Leo the Great

What are sacraments?

mysterion - sacramentum

-Grace and symbol

"The purpose and function of the symbol is not to illustrate (this would presume the absence of what is illustrated) but rather to manifest and to communicate what is manifested. We might say that the symbol does not so much 'resemble' the reality that it symbolizes as it participates in it, and therefore it is capable of communicating it in reality. In other words, the difference (and it is a radical one) between our contemporary understanding of the symbol and the original one consists in the fact that while today we understand the symbol as the representation or sign of an absent reality, something that is not really in the

sign itself (just as there is no real actual water in the chemical symbol H₂O), in the original understanding it is the manifestation and presence of the other reality - but precisely as other, which, under given circumstances, cannot be manifested and made present in any other way than as a symbol." -Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

"These symbols do not merely remind us of something in the past. Through these sacred symbols, the ultimate Reality is in very truth disclosed and conveyed." -Fr. George Florovsky

-World as Sacrament - participation in Christ here and now.

-Sacraments

Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Holy Orders, Confession, Marriage, Holy Unction

