

Inquirer's Class - Lesson #5

Orthodox Spirituality

"If there is any hallmark of genuine spirituality it is that it does not exist as a separate thing called spirituality, but illuminates the whole of our lives." - Fr. John Garvey

-The word "spiritual" comes from the same word describing the third person of the trinity - the Holy Spirit. The one who is "spiritual" is one who truly has the Holy Spirit living within him. This means a different way of living, not an abstraction.

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." (1 Cor. 2:14-15)

-Orthodox spirituality, then, is our preparing ourselves to receive Christ's love into our hearts. This goes back to **theosis**, or deification.

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my

absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. 2:12)

"We were meant to share God's life as completely as it is possible for human beings to do so." -Fr. John Garvey

"Spirituality is about moving more and more closely into communion with the source of life, with God, who has been revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Fr. John Garvey

-We are not individuals who find God alone in some kind of esoteric "spirituality". We find him in the life of the Church as the community of the Faithful gathered around the Bishops who are gathered around Christ at the altar. Thus, all Orthodox spirituality is essentially communal in nature. Everything proceeds from the life, wisdom, and teaching of the Church, the body of Christ.

-We spoke earlier about the disciplines of the Church as a kind of tilling the soil to receive Christ - this is the essence of Orthodox spirituality.

-It is the prodigal son in the pig pen, realizing his brokenness and sin and returning to the house of the Father. (Luke 15:11-32)

So what is "Orthodox Spirituality" ?

-It is the active, intentional, living out of one's faith in Christ within the life of the Orthodox Christian - **Orthopraxis**.

"Spiritual is the man who is witness to the Holy Spirit within his heart and is thus aware of the indwelling of the Triune God. In this way he realizes that he is son of God by grace; and within his heart therefore he cries, 'Abba, Father.'" . . .St. Basil the Great in examining what is meant by 'man becomes the temple of the Most Holy Spirit,' teaches - inspired by God - that *"the man who is the Temple of the Holy Spirit is not disturbed by temptations and constant cares; he seeks God and has communion with Him. Clearly the spiritual man is he who has the Holy Spirit within and this is confirmed by his uninterrupted remembrance of God."*

There are four main areas that we can speak of concerning this "spiritual" life:

Prayer - Prayer is the unceasing remembrance of God in all things.

-*"Pray without ceasing."* (I Thess. 5:17).

-*"When the Spirit makes Its dwelling place in someone, he does not cease to pray because the Spirit will constantly pray in him."* St. Isaac the Syrian
"This is how you pray continually - not by offering prayer in words, but by joining yourself to God

through your whole way of life, so that your life becomes one continuous and uninterrupted prayer."
St. Basil the Great

Ascetic Struggle - *ascesis* - to exercise, effort, exploit. In the Orthodox tradition this has become a technical term referring to one's mastery of the spiritual over the carnal - spiritual warfare. The cell - *nepsis* - vigilance. Repentance.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Eph. 6:11)

Daily Martyrdom - *martyria* - to witness, to proclaim. St. Athanasius was said to suffer as a martyr everyday in his conscience.

-This is the taking up of one's cross of struggle and becoming like Christ in His voluntary Passion.

-Spiritual direction and accountability- the breaking of one's will.

-*"To abandon your self-will is to shed your blood."* St. Barsanuphius

-Obedience breaks the back of pride.

-*"The one who chooses himself as a spiritual guide is a fool and a blind man."* The Desert fathers

Liturgical participation

-It is in the gathering of the people of God in the liturgical life of the Church that we become most like we truly are.