

The Church – The Place of Man's Theosis*

What a great blessing that we commune through the immaculate Mysteries! Christ becomes ours; the life of Christ becomes ours; His blood becomes our blood. St. John Chrysostom says that God has nothing more to give man than what he gives him in Holy Communion. Man cannot ask anything more of God than what he receives from Christ in Holy Communion.

So, being baptised, chrismated, confessing, we commune through the Body and Blood of the Lord, and we too become gods by Grace; we unite with God; we are no longer strangers, for we have become familiar with God.

Inside the Church in which we unite with God, we live this new reality which Christ brought to the world: the new creation. This is the life of the Church, of Christ, which becomes ours as a gift from the Holy Spirit.

Everything in the Church leads to Theosis; the Holy Liturgy, the Mysteries, divine Worship, the Gospel sermon, the fasting; all of these lead to this one thing. The Church alone is the place of Theosis.

The Church is not a social, cultural, or historical organisation, and does not resemble other organisations in the world. It is not like the different establishments of the world. The world has fine institutions, fine organisations, fine establishments and other fine things, but our Orthodox Church is the unrepeatable, the sole place for the communion of God with man, for the Theosis of man. Only within the Church can man become a god, and nowhere else: not in universities; not in social services; not in any of the fine and good things that the world has. None of these are able to offer what the Church offers, however good they may be.

No matter how much worldly institutions and systems progress, they can never replace the Church.

It is possible that we weak and sinful men go through crises and difficulties from time to time within the Church. It is possible for scandals to happen in the bosom of the Church. All these happen in the Church because we are as yet on the way to Theosis, and it is very natural that human weaknesses still exist. We are becoming gods, but not yet. So no matter how often these things occur, we will not leave the Church, because within the Church we have the only possibility to unite with God.

For example, when we go to Church to attend the service, we may meet people there who do not pay attention to the holy service; who hold conversations and distract our attention.

Then along comes a seemingly reasonable thought which says: "What do you gain by coming to Church? Might it not be better to sit at home and pray in greater peace and comfort?"

However, we must contradict this evil thought with discretion: "Yes, perhaps I will have more outward peace at home, but I will not have God's Grace to deify and sanctify me. I will not have Christ, Who is present in His Church. I will not have His Holy Body and His precious Blood, which are on the holy Altar in His holy Church. I will not partake in the Last Supper of the Holy Liturgy. I will be cut off from my fellow brethren in Christ, together with whom we form Christ's body."

So, whatever may happen, we will not leave the Church, because only within it do we find the path to Theosis.

**Theosis: The True Purpose of Human Life – Archimandrite George, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Saint Gregorios – Mount Athos, 2006.*