

## Wedding Supper of the Lamb

### A. **"God Wants to Marry You!" - The Consummation of the Lord's Plan of Salvation.**

"Let us rejoice and be glad  
and give him glory.  
For the wedding day of the Lamb has come,  
his bride has made herself ready.  
She was allowed to wear  
a bright, clean linen garment."  
(The linen represents the righteous deeds of the holy ones.)  
Then the angel said to me, "Write this:  
Blessed are those who have been called to the  
wedding feast of the Lamb." And he said to me,  
"These words are true; they come from God."

Revelation 19:7-9.

### B. **Old Testament Promises of Our Betrothal to God as Our Husband:**

For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. Isaiah 54:5.

And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. Hosea 2:19

"And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' Hosea 2:16

"When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord God, and you became mine. Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with fine leather. I wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk. And I adorned you with ornaments and put bracelets on your wrists and a chain on your neck. And I put a ring on your nose and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. Ezekiel 16:8-14

For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the Lord has called you like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. Isaiah 54:5-7

Not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. Jeremiah 31:32

Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! Ezekiel 16:32

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Revelation 21:2

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:31-32

The word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the Lord, “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the Lord, the firstfruits of his harvest. All who ate of it incurred guilt; disaster came upon them, declares the Lord.” Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel. Thus says the Lord: “What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless? Jeremiah 2:1-11

But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Revelation 2:4-5

For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:2

Thus says the Lord: “Where is your mother's certificate of divorce, with which I sent her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was sent away. Why, when I came, was there no man; why, when I called, was there no one to answer? Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a desert; their fish stink for lack of water and die of thirst. Isaiah 50:1-2

The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. Revelation 22:17

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. Isaiah 61:10

For as a young man marries a young woman, so your sons will marry you; and as a groom rejoices over his bride, so your God will rejoice over you. Isaiah 62:5

God has made a home in the heavens for the sun. It bursts forth like a radiant bridegroom after his wedding. It rejoices like a great athlete eager to run the race. Psalm 19:4-5

Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests be sad while the groom is with them? The time will come when the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. Matthew 9:15

The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son. Matthew 22:2

Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. The five who were foolish didn't take enough olive oil for their lamps, but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil. When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. Matthew 25:1-5

“But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. Matthew 25:10

But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. Mark 2:20

Jesus replied, “Marriage is for people here on earth. But in the age to come, those worthy of being raised from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage.” Luke 20:34-35

It is the bridegroom who marries the bride, and the bridegroom's friend is simply glad to stand with him and hear his vows. Therefore, I am filled with joy at his success. He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less. John 3:29-30

For I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband—Christ. But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. 2 Corinthians 11:2-3

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Ephesians 5:23

Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. Revelation 19:7

Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! Revelation 19:9

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. Revelation 21:2

### **C. The Eternal Sacrament of Marriage.**

1. After Christ returns and concludes the Final Judgment in all souls, every person will experience an eternal life either in Hell or Heaven. Our discussion will focus on Heaven since we have said that one purpose, if not the sole purpose of the Seven Sacraments is to light our path and guide us to Heaven.
2. With one exception, all of the sacraments of Catholic Church will cease in Heaven except one. There will be no need for the rite of reconciliation in Heaven. There will no longer be Holy Orders as there will be no need for priests, bishops or deacons. In our resurrected, glorified bodies, there will be no need for the anointing of the sick. There will be no rites of Baptism or confirmation. There will be no need for Holy Eucharist, the summit of our faith in this life, because we will be with Him and in Him in Heaven. But the sacrament of marriage will continue, but transformed and deified.
3. Marriage in heaven is not repealed or set aside. It is perfected, made whole and complete in a perfect way by the reality and unity of being in communion with all other beings created in the image and likeness of God in the unity and love and glory of the Trinity. We do this through the resurrected, glorified and incarnate body, soul, blood and divinity of One Christ loving himself and emptying and giving Himself in love through the Holy Spirit to be filled with love from the Father. In that state we dwell in, marvel at and give God the glory for the Creation He has called into being for us.
4. The Bible begins and ends with a wedding. Throughout the Bible, God refers to Himself as bridegroom and we His people as His bride. In Hosea 2:18, 21-22, God says "On that day—oracle of the LORD, You shall call me "My husband. I will betroth you to me forever: I will betroth you to me with justice and with judgment, with loyalty and with compassion; I will betroth you to me with fidelity, and you shall know the LORD.
5. In Matthew 19, when challenged by the Pharisees on the Law of Moses allowing divorce, Jesus, as the Lawgiver with full, final and perfect authority, tells them that

for the hardness of their hearts, Moses allowed divorce, but that it was not so "**in the beginning.**" In his Theology of the Body, Saint John Paul II points us back to the beginning to understand the original state of man; how Adam and Eve fell; how we live in as sinful human beings whose nature has been wounded and subjected to death and concupiscence; but also the destiny of eschatological man at the end. You will recall that from many of Deacon Henry's homilies explicating readings from the Gospel, he takes us back to the Garden of Paradise to understand how in Jesus our original state is restored.

6. So we will follow this hermeneutic tool by looking "in the beginning."
7. There are two stories of Creation. In the first story in Genesis Chapter 1, we learn that man was created on the last day of Creation as the pinnacle of God's work and that all of Creation was called into being for our sakes. We learn two incredible points in the first Chapter of Genesis: (i) we were originally formed in the image and likeness of God Himself and unlike everything else that was called into being by God at a distance as it were saying "let it be," when it came to man, God Himself personally formed us from the clay of the earth and intimately breathed into that clay His spirit of life, and (ii) God gave us only one command or task: "**Be fruitful and multiply.**"
8. In these elements, we are given an insight into the nature of God and the Holy Trinity because man and woman, in His image and likeness, whose core nature is to be "fruitful" reflect and mirror the Trinity in the family.
9. The theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar has written a beautiful work titled, Theology of Fruitfulness, in which he says:  
  
"All beings essentially and increasingly appear as epiphanic: they are all inherently self-showing, self-giving, and self-expressing... But this aspect of self-openness is also endowed with the miracle of fruitfulness.  
  
God's being in the Trinity is an infinite fecundity that reveals itself externally in creation; whatever is made in his image must, of its very nature, have a share in his fecundity... Since mankind was made male and female and since the first word God spoke to them was 'Be fruitful and multiply,' it cannot be doubted that human beings were created for fecundity."
10. In a sense, the Trinity is a perfect, infinite state in which the Three Persons empty themselves to be filled with the other. God the Father eternally begets the Son through a perfect loving knowing of Himself, and the Father and the Son through a perfect and loving act of the will share that love which is perfect subsisting, eternal being itself, the Person of the Holy Spirit. In the Trinity we have a perfect unitive state of the Lover, the Beloved and the Love they share. Because this is perfect

love, in an act of sheer unnecessary goodness, this Trinitarian sharing of perfect love desires to share this love and make it manifest. In a sense the Creation is the Trinity's procreation and as Paul says in Romans 8:22, "We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now."

This is why man in the duality and complementarity of male and female were called in the beginning and must still be faithful to the command "Be fruitful and multiply." Man and woman in marriage joined together as one soul and one body, "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh," must be faithful to their vocation. Therefore, the conjugal act must be unitive and procreative. If the conjugal act is not open to a procreative end, then we literally are acting contrary to our nature. "Be fruitful" is not a task. It is the very essence of our being and who we are. If a man and woman cease to be fruitful, in a very real sense, we cease to "be" human.

11. Christ gave us the rite of marriage in the beginning and at Cana he sanctified and raised marriage to a sacrament and blessed it with an incredible sign to call us back to his command, "Be fruitful," by changing sterile, lifeless water to joyful, life sustaining and nourishing wine. And at the Last Supper in His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus shared with us the form and matter of Rite of Marriage that will be celebrated at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb that is described in the final Chapters of Revelation where the Bible ends where it begins - - with a wedding!

Perhaps the form of this eternal marriage may be found in these words from Jesus' High Priestly Prayer:

"So that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me." John 17.

#### **D. Qualities of Our Glorified Bodies.**

Paul tells us that as Jesus was resurrected from the dead so shall we. In Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul says:

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown corruptible; it is raised incorruptible. It is sown dishonorable; it is raised glorious. It is sown weak; it is raised powerful. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual one." 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.

#### **What are the qualities of our resurrected bodies?**

1. **Identity.** The very same body that falls in death will rise to be glorified; we will not get a different body. St. Thomas says, "For we cannot call it resurrection unless the soul return to the same body, since resurrection is a second rising, and the same

thing rises that falls: wherefore resurrection regards the body which after death falls rather than the soul which after death lives. And consequently if it be not the same body which the soul resumes, it will not be a resurrection, but rather the assuming of a new body” (Suppl. Q. 79.1).

The same body rises and so there is continuity. But there is also development and a shining forth of a new glory and of capabilities that our bodies do not currently enjoy. Scripture attests that the same body that dies will also rise. Job said, “And after my flesh has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes — I, and not another” (Job 19:26-27). And to the Apostles, shocked at His resurrection, Jesus said, “Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Lk 24:39). Hence the same body rises and so there is continuity. But there is also development and a shining forth of a new glory and of capabilities that our bodies do not currently enjoy.

2. **Integrity.** We will retain all of the parts of our current bodies. This means every physical part of our body, even the less noble parts (e.g. intestines). It is clear from the Gospel that Jesus ate, even after the resurrection. He ate fish while in their company (Lk 24:43). He also ate with the disciples in Emmaus (Lk 24:30). He ate breakfast with them at the lake shore (Jn 21:12). Hence it follows that even less noble parts of our body will rise, for eating and digestion are still functions of a resurrected body. St. Thomas argues that food will not be necessary to the resurrected body (Suppl. Q. 81.4), but it is clearly possible to eat, for Christ demonstrated it.

St. Thomas reasons that every aspect of our bodies will rise since the soul is the form of the body. That is, the body has the faculties it has due to some aspect of the soul. The soul has something to say and hence the body has the capacity to talk and write and engage in other forms of communication. The soul has the capacity to do detailed work and hence the body has complex faculties such as delicate and nimble fingers, arms and so forth, to carry out this work. Now body is thus apt for the capacities of the soul, though now imperfectly, but then even more perfectly (cf Summa Suppl. Q. 80.1).

3. **Quality.** What about age, gender, and other physical characteristics? Our bodies will be youthful and will retain our original gender. Youthful here does not necessarily mean 21 years old. In the Philippians text that began this post, Paul says that our glorified bodies will be conformed to Christ’s glorified body. Jesus’ body rose at the age of 30-33 years. Elsewhere, St. Paul exhorts Christians to persevere: “Until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). Hence it would seem that Christ’s resurrected body is the perfect age.

St. Augustine also speculates that because Christ rose again of youthful age (about 30), others also will rise again of a youthful age (cf *De Civ. Dei* xxii). All of the resurrection appearances make it clear that though still recognizable, His appearance was somehow changed — and this is a mystery.

St. Thomas further notes, “Man will rise again without any defect of human nature, because as God founded human nature without a defect, even so will He restore it without defect. Now human nature has a twofold defect. First, because it has not yet attained its ultimate perfection. Secondly, because it has already gone back from its ultimate perfection. The first defect is found in children, the second in the aged: and consequently in each of these human nature will be brought by the resurrection to the state of its ultimate perfection which is in the youthful age, at which the movement of growth terminates, and from which the movement of decrease begins” (Suppl. Q. 81.1). Further, since gender is part of human perfection, all will rise according to their current gender. Other qualities such as height and hair color will also be retained, it would seem, since this diversity is part of man’s perfection.

4. **Impassability.** We will be immune from death and pain. Scripture states this clearly:

The dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality (1 Cor 15:52-53).

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away (Rev 21:4).

Pope Benedict XVI, in *Spe Salvi* (November 30, 2007), explains impassibility in these terms:

Impassibility is surely the most longed-for gift that the Resurrection promises. Rising from the dead would not be nearly so great, would be even a sort of curse, without the assurance that our new life lasts forever, that suffering and death will really be no more. Impassibility results from the newfound perfect harmony of soul and body. No longer will the spirit be willing but the flesh weak. Eternal life, the vision of God, has bodily consequences. We pass through death into a new kind of life, not merely an everlasting prolongation of our current status.

Indeed, Christians are commanded to take up their crosses daily— but not indefinitely. And those crosses are embraced precisely because they lead to the Resurrection. Death is accepted because it gives way to life, penance, and fasting because the Bridegroom will come again. The cross is a kind of preparatory school for the



Resurrection since it is the way that we live out divine love in a fallen world. The consummation of that love heals the suffering we must endure to learn it. And so, even when the crosses we have borne in this life are only a memory, we may bear in our bodies, like the Lord himself, the marks they have left on us: no longer wounds of pain or shame, but badges of God's transfiguring love.

5. **Subtlety**. John's Gospel makes it a point to emphasize that Jesus reached the disciples through locked doors, that he brought peace to them in the place where they had shut themselves up in fear and doubt. But what of the physical aspect of this occurrence? Theologians call this the gift of subtlety, the endowment of the glorified body by which it has a certain power to penetrate what, to a mortal body, is impenetrable, and this in a precise manner, and without violence.

Our bodies will be free from the things that restrain them now. Subtlety refers to the capacity of the resurrected body to be completely conformed to the capacities of the soul. St. Thomas says of this quality, "the term 'subtlety' has been transferred to those bodies which are most perfectly subject to their form, and are most fully perfected thereby ... For just as a subtle thing is said to be penetrative, for the reason that it reaches to the inmost part of a thing, so is an intellect said to be subtle because it reaches to the insight of the intrinsic principles and the hidden natural properties of a thing. In like manner a person is said to have subtle sight, because he is able to perceive by sight things of the smallest size: and the same applies to the other senses. Accordingly, people have differed by ascribing subtlety to the glorified bodies in different ways" (Suppl. Q. 83.1).

In other words, the body is perfected because the soul is perfected. The resurrected body is fully conformed to the soul. In my current lowly body, though I may wish to go to Vienna in a few moments to hear an opera, my body cannot pull that off. My current body cannot instantly be somewhere else on the planet. I have to exert effort and expend time to get there. After the resurrection, Jesus could appear and disappear in a room despite the closed doors; he could simply be where he wanted instantly. Before his resurrection he had to take long physical journeys (cf Jn 19:20, 26). This quality is very closely related to agility, which we consider next.

6. **Agility**. We will have complete freedom of movement. Our souls will direct our bodies without hindrance. St. Thomas says, "The glorified body will be altogether subject to the glorified soul, so that not only will there be nothing in it to resist the will of the spirit ... from the glorified soul there will flow into the body a certain perfection, whereby it will become adapted to that subjection ... Now the soul is united to body not only as its form, but also as its mover; and in both ways the glorified body must be most perfectly subject to the glorified soul." We have already referred Jesus' ability, in His glorified body, to be anywhere at once, unhindered by things such as locked doors. Consider these other description of the agility of the resurrected body:

As they talked [on the road to Emmaus] and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them (Lk 24:15).

Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus, and he disappeared from their sight (Lk 24:31).

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you” (Lk 24:36).

7. **Clarity**. The glory of our souls will be visible in our bodies. We will be beautiful and radiant. It is written in the Scriptures:

The just shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Mt 13:43).

The just shall shine, and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds (Wis 3:7).

The body in sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory (1 Cor 15:43).

The Transfiguration not only shows us Jesus' divine nature when God the Father tells Peter, John and James to listen to Him, but it reveals how we shall appear.

## **E. Theosis.**

Saint Paul and the other apostles used many images and analogies when speaking of our redemption, and one concept that became central to the Fathers since New Testament times was that of deification.

Christ has shared in our poverty so that we may share in the richness of his divinity: for our sakes He became poor, so that through His poverty we might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9); Christ prayed that we might share in the perichoresis of the Trinity, “that they may be one, just as We are one – I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfectly one” (John 17:22-23); we have been made “partakers of his divine nature (2 Peter 1:4).

If humans are to share in God’s glory, they are to become by grace what God is by nature, i.e., we are to be deified. As St Athanasius put it,

The Word was made man in order that we might be made divine [also translated, that we might become god]. He displayed himself through a body, that we might receive knowledge of the invisible Father. He endured insult at the hands of men, that we might inherit immortality.

This is only possible because we are mystically and ontologically united to Christ through faith, in the Holy Spirit; therefore, our redemption and deification is only possible if Christ

is fully God and fully human, and if the Holy Spirit himself is also fully God. In fact, this became central in the Father's arguments for the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in the fourth century. No one less than God can save humanity, and so Christ must be fully God; but only if He is truly human, as we are, can we humans participate in what He has done for us.

Scripture states that human beings have been created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Most of the Greek Fathers made a distinction between those two terms, arguing that the image of God refers to our intellectual capacities and our freedom of will, while the likeness of God refers to our conformity to God according to virtue. Our image has not been lost in the Fall for we retain our reason and human free will; but what Adam failed to do, and that which we must attain through the grace of God enabling our efforts – the synergia of God and man – is likeness to God. To become like God is to acquire divine likeness, to be assimilated to God through virtue, and therefore, to be deified, to become a second god, a god by grace.

St Seraphim of Sarov taught that “the true aim of the Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit.” Vladimir Lossky argues that this “sums up the whole spiritual tradition of the Orthodox Church.” The acquisition of the Holy Spirit is nothing other than deification. The final goal at which every Christian must aim is to become god, to attain theosis; for Orthodoxy, our salvation and redemption mean our deification.

Just as the Persons of the Trinity inhere in one another in the divine perichoresis, we also are called to dwell in the Trinitarian God, to share in the life of the Trinity, and to dwell in one another in an unceasing movement of love. This idea of personal and organic union between God and humans – God dwelling in us and we in Him – is often highlighted in the gospel of Saint John and the epistles of Saint Paul; again, Saint Peter speaks of our sharing in the divine nature.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

### **Essence versus Energies:**

It is important to note that the idea of deification must always be understood in the light of the distinction between God's essence and His energies, as Saint Gregory of Palamas stated, union with God means union with the divine energies, not the divine essence. The latter remains transcendent, inaccessible to creation ontologically, as well as intellectually – thus the need of apophatic theology.

Union with God's essence would constitute pantheism (or panentheism) which the Church rejects. In the mystical union of God and man through deification, the Creator and the creature are not fused into a single being but remain distinct. Human beings fully retain

their personhood even after attaining deification, and their union with God is the analog of the Trinity, where there is unity in diversity. Of course, the distinction being that in the Trinity the Persons share the same numerical nature, whereas human persons only share their specific nature with other humans and remain human even while participating in the divine nature.

We remain creatures while becoming god by grace, as Christ remained God when becoming man by the Incarnation. We do not become God by nature, but created gods, gods by grace or by status. Nonetheless, deified saints, according to St Maximus, are those who are worthy of God and have one and the same energy with him. Saints do not lose their free will, but when deified they voluntarily conform their will to the will of God in love.

Deification involves not only the inward person but also the body, for human beings are hylomorphic beings, unities of body and soul, and Christ took upon himself full humanity in order to redeem the whole person. Therefore, according to St Maximus, “our body is deified at the same time as our soul.” Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are to offer them as living sacrifices to God (1 Cor. 6:19, Rom. 12:1).

The full deification of the body must wait until the Last Day, when our redemption will be fully consummated and the righteous will rise from the dead and be clothed with a spiritual, incorruptible body. In that Day, the glory of the Holy Spirit which now shines hidden in the inward man will transfigure our bodies, coming out from within and shining visibly with the light of Mount Tabor. In the meantime, we receive the firstfruits of our redemption, and as such some saints have experienced tokens of the visible, bodily glorification.

St John Maximovitch

Reports of saints shining visibly in times of prayer include that of St Seraphim of Sarov, Arsenius the Great, Abba Pambo and others. Here in San Francisco, the incorrupt relics of my patron saint, St. John Maximovitch, lie displayed for all to see and venerate at the Holy Virgin Cathedral.

Indeed, the doctrine of theosis, which informs a worldview of God suffusing human beings with his grace, in his energies, is also the framework for the understanding that God redeems not only human beings, but all of physical creation as well. Not only our human body but the whole of the material world will be eventually transfigured, for Christ came to make all things new, and God’s redemptive plan culminates in the establishment not only of a new heaven, but also a new earth. Creation is to be saved and glorified along with humans, and icons are the firstfruits of this redemption of matter.

The Incarnation is both the basis and means through which God redeems all of creation, including matter. Christ took flesh and thus the material order in him was united to God. From his Incarnation springs God’s cosmic redemption, and the doctrine of the deification of the body, its iconology, and indeed its view of the holiness and even sacramentality of the created order are firmly grounded on it.

“God has become man in order that man might become God” – the sentence occurs three times in St. Irenaeus, and again in St. Athanasius, and it becomes common to theologians of all ages. As Vladimir Lossky says, “The profound meaning of the Incarnation resides in this physical and metaphysical vision of nature metamorphosized by grace, in this restoration henceforth acquired by human nature, in this breach opened through the opaqueness of death that leads to deification.”

**F. Our Eternal Life in Christ with Glorified Bodies and Souls Energized and Perfected by Partaking of the Divine Nature.**

And after the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, As Saint Augustine explains in his homily on the first epistle of John: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed."

We will live eternally, *Unus Christus Amans Seipsum* (One Christ loving Himself), the perfect, deep, unitive communion with and living at the heart of the Trinity partaking of His divinity. This is not some selfish Christ turned in on Himself. This is Christ, the Head, in deep communion with all the members of His body. This is all the members in Christ experiencing deep mystical communion with Him and one another, all swept up into the life of the Trinity. Again, as St. Paul says, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s. (1 Cor 3:23).

Catechism 1643: "Conjugal love involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter - appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of will. It aims at a deeply personal unity, a unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul; it demands indissolubility and faithfulness in definitive mutual giving; and it is open to fertility. In a word it is a question of the normal characteristics of all natural conjugal love, but with a new significance which not only purifies and strengthens them, but raises them to the extent of making them the expression of specifically Christian values."

The unity and indissolubility of marriage: Catechism 1644 :The love of the spouses requires, of its very nature, the unity and indissolubility of the spouses' community of persons, which embraces their entire life: "so they are no longer two, but one flesh." They "are called to grow continually in their communion through day-to-day fidelity to their marriage promise of total mutual self-giving." This human communion is confirmed, purified, and completed by communion in Jesus Christ, given through the sacrament of Matrimony. It is deepened by lives of the common faith and by the Eucharist received together.