
Living the divine life

Return to the original grace of being made “in the image”

Man was made after the image and likeness of God; but sin marred the beauty of the image by dragging the soul down to passionate desires. Now, God, who made man, is the true life. Therefore, when man lost his likeness to God, he lost his participation in the true life; separated and estranged from God as he is, it is impossible for him to enjoy the blessedness of the divine life.

Let us return, then, to the grace [which was ours] in the beginning and from which we have alienated ourselves by sin, and let us again adorn ourselves with the beauty of God’s image, being made like our Creator through the quieting of our passions. He who, to the best of his ability, copies within himself the tranquillity of the divine nature attains to a likeness with the very soul of God; and, being made like God in this manner, he also achieves in full a semblance to the divine life and abides continually in unending blessedness.¹

Becoming a companion of the angels

Examine the actions of each day, compare them with those of the previous day and press on toward improvement. Advance in virtue, that you may become a companion of the angels. Spend your time in retirement, not for days nor months, but throughout many years, praising your Lord in song, night and day, in imitation of the Cherubim. If thus you begin and thus make an end, travelling the straight road for the short time of your probation, you will, by the grace of God, enter into paradise with the lamp of your soul brilliantly alight, to rejoice with Christ for ever and ever. Amen.²

The qualities of a spiritual director

With much care and forethought set about finding a man skilled in guiding those who are making their way toward God who will be an unerring director of your life. He should be adorned with virtues, bearing witness by his own works to his love for God, conversant with the Holy Scripture, recollected, free from avarice, a good, quiet man, tranquil, pleasing to God, a lover of the poor, mild, forgiving, labouring hard for the spiritual advancement of his clients, without vainglory or arrogance, impervious to flattery, not given to vacillation, and preferring God to all things else. If you should find such a one, surrender yourself to him, completely renouncing and casting aside your own will, that you may be found a clean vessel, preserving unto your praise and glory the good qualities deposited in you.³

¹ *An Ascetical Discourse* (Fathers of the Church, Vol. 9, p.207)

² *On Renunciation of the World* (Fathers of the Church, Vol. 9, p.31)

³ *On Renunciation of the World* (Fathers of the Church, Vol. 9, p.19)