

# EUTHANASIA AND THEOSIS

## ***Or, what kind of spirituality best helps a person to live through the process of ageing and dying in a positive and helpful way?***

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### INTRODUCTION

My thesis is really quite simple: that a good death is facilitated by a godly life. I doubt if many people of faith would want to question this. Indeed, I would say that most people would prefer a “good” death rather than any other; and that they would rather live a “godly” life (even though they may not use that word) rather than an ungodly one. But what, precisely are we to mean by these terms? That is the nub of the matter of Euthanasia and Theosis.

### EUTHANASIA

Let me take, first, that rather emotive word in my title – euthanasia – and attempt to clarify how I will use it.

Euthanasia, together with physician-assisted suicide (PAS) has been a subject of intense debate in the public arena in New Zealand in the recent past, and internationally it continues to be a subject of religious and political debate (cf. Pepinster, 2009). It features in legal cases as evidenced, for example, by the responses to the United Kingdom High Court decision in the case of Debbie Purdy that the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) must provide “guidance, explaining how decisions are made about whether or not to prosecute someone for assisting suicide”. (Jones, 2009)

It would seem in general, however, that public opinion is changing, insofar as high-profile court cases no longer occasion public scandal so much as more insightful reflection on end-of-life issues.

I am not going to deal with the medical or legal aspects of euthanasia, but the spiritual. The word comes from the Greek *eu θάνατος* meaning “good death”. I shall use the word in that sense and, more particularly, to refer to “holy dying” or “dying well”. What is a “good death” and what constitutes “dying well”?

We may note that the question of ‘how to die well’ begins to feature in a person’s mind when awareness of the process of ageing comes to them. I don’t need to be in a Rest Home to be in this stage (I myself am aware of it) and so it is part of the life and thought not only of a chaplain to the elderly but to the priest or

pastor of any community that has a range of ages among its members.

To ‘die well’ does, of course, have a medical dimension: to be pain-free, etc. But what is it to die well in the *spiritual* sense? It will have issues relating to the past (guilt, etc). It will have issues relating to the future (what will *post mortem* be like?) It may involve transcending pain, and learning – perhaps with great difficulty – to recite words such as these from a modern translation (Merrill, 2000) of Psalm 27. 6, 7:

I shall rise above my struggles, my pain,  
Shouting blessings of gratitude in Love’s Heart  
And singing melodies of praise to my Beloved.

It will certainly – for the pastor – involve significant issues of the present moment: what is our desire?

What do ‘holy dying’ and a ‘good death’ mean for the Christian? The process of “dying well” brings us to a closer sense of God; the issue of a “good death” is that we are ‘with God’. Here we come to the subject of *theosis*.

### THEOSIS

Thomas Merton wrote in his *Seeds of Contemplation*:

To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence: for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name. ...

To find love I must enter into the sanctuary where it is hidden: which is the essence of God. And to enter into His sanctuary I must become holy as He is holy, perfect as He is perfect. None of this can be achieved by any effort of my own, by any striving of my own, by any competition with other men. It means leaving all the ways that men can follow or understand.

I who am without love cannot become love unless Love identifies me with Himself. But if He sends His own Love, Himself, to act and love in me and in all that I do, then I shall be transformed, I shall discover who I am and shall possess my true identity by losing myself in Him.

And that is what is called sanctity.  
(Merton, 1960, pp.23f)

He could have written his final sentence to read: “And that is what is called theosis.”

Most commonly associated with Orthodox theology and spirituality, and most fully developed in Orthodox teaching, the concept is unfamiliar though not entirely unknown in the West.

A.M. (Donald) Allchin surveyed the works of such Anglican divines as Richard Hooker, Lancelot Andrewes, E.B. Pusey and the Oxford Movement to show that deification – becoming by grace what God is by nature – and the mystery of the incarnation lie at the heart of Anglicanism, as indeed of all Catholic theology. (Allchin, 1988)

Yet it remains a *hidden* treasure, as Robert Rakestraw explains:

The idea of divinization, of redeemed human nature somehow participating in the very life of God, is found to a surprising extent throughout Christian history, although it is practically unknown to the majority of Christians (and even many theologians) in the West. In Orthodox theology, however, it is the controlling doctrine. (Rakestraw, 1997, p.257)

The word theosis has been rendered in English by the words ‘divinization’ (as in the passage just quoted) and ‘deification’, and even by ‘participation’; it literally means that we become like God by Grace.

The earliest Orthodox theologians took the doctrine of theosis from their reading of the Bible. In Genesis 1.26 we read of God saying, “Let us make humankind in our image, after our likeness.” Orthodoxy teaches us that we have retained the image of God but that, in the Fall, we have lost the likeness – which will be restored in Christ. It is the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit to restore humankind to that likeness. We may say that the Christian life from Baptism is a journey of co-operation with the work of the Holy Spirit in the restoration of that lost likeness in Christ. The working out of restoration is recorded in the New Testament.

Of the several references in the New Testament to union with God which the theologians of the early Church have taken to build their understanding of theosis, one would be Colossians 2.6-7, 9-10a,

Therefore, since Jesus was delivered to you as Christ and Lord, live your lives in union with him. Be rooted in him; be built in him; be consolidated in the faith you were taught; let your hearts overflow with thankfulness... For it is in Christ that the complete being of the Godhead dwells embodied, and in him you have been brought to completion. (New English Bible)

Saint Paul’s message to the Christians in Colossae is not that they are to worship God from a distance, but that they are to live in union with God. Jesus was delivered to them as Christ and in Christ the complete being of the Godhead dwells. Union with God requires of us the same selflessness that was required of Christ who ‘though he was in the form of God, did not regard

equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, and was born in human likeness’ (Philippians 2.5-7). One might say that as Christ surrendered himself to humanity in the incarnation, we surrender ourselves to God in deification.

‘Surrender’ implies a cost and, for us, that is the loss of self and the practice of selflessness. This is not easy for any of us; and for those who have already lost so much – health, mobility, independence – it can be harder still to hear that they must surrender *themselves*. Unfortunately, this has often been taught as a negative form of self-denial.

There is more to be said in the teaching of theosis, however, that enhances peace and hope. In union with Christ Jesus we surrender ourselves into a greater reality. Surrender is not a diminution of self and not even an enhancement of *self*; it is a growing into God. As we surrender into union with God we find God and, in doing so, we discover who we essentially are as persons created in the image and likeness of God. In union, we discover ourselves in a new way that we may not have known for a long time – or, indeed, ever. We come to see ourselves as known, loved, cherished and cared for. We were not created ‘playthings of the gods’, but for relationship; for a relationship of love with the God who is love. (1 John 4.18)

John and Paul alike emphasise this element of Christianity. This is what people have been created by: the love of God. And this is what they have been created for: for the understanding that comes with discovering themselves to be loved – knowing themselves to be known. We are created in the image of God, to be perfect as God is perfect, and to be in union with God in thankfulness.

The story of the opening chapter of the book Genesis is that our creation is very good; and we are to bring that “very goodness” – that perfection which is the image of God in which we were created – to God. We bring perfection when we are so in harmony with God that we reflect all the fullness of glory. Few people are ‘so in harmony’, but each of us (if I may extend the metaphor) has some apprehension of the tune. The pastoral task of a chaplain to the ageing is to enable them to recognise those snatches of melody which have played through their lives and which enable them each to bring their own individual contribution to the eternal song of praise. Each one is an individual because God has made us after the divine image. The reason for our self is that each one of us is an expression, an imprint, of the eternal Self of God.

Of all the various places in the New Testament which were read by the Fathers of the early church in the East to refer to theosis, perhaps the most significant for them was the Second Letter of Peter, chapter one, verses three and (especially) four:

3. His (viz. Christ's) divine power (της θείας δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ) 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 (viz. God), 4. by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, **and become partakers of the divine nature.**

Maximus the Confessor, applies this verse in his Commentary on the Our Father, and says that

[Christ] leads us finally in the supreme ascent in divine realities to the Father of Lights wherein he makes us sharers in the divine nature by participating in the grace of the Spirit, through which we receive the title of God's children and become clothed entirely with the complete person who is the author of this grace, without limiting or defiling him who is Son of God by nature, from whom, by whom, and in whom we have and shall have being, movement and life. (Berthold, 1985, p.118)

For Maximus, salvation means deification. It is a progress from our fallen condition whereby, with the acquisition of the Holy Spirit and through Grace, we eventually become participants in the life of God. It begins here in this life as the Grace of the Holy Spirit working within us enables our union with Christ. The First Letter of John 2.27-28 says that "Christ has poured out his Spirit on you" so we should "obey the Spirit's teaching and remain in union with Christ." (Good News Bible) That union is not here complete; it is a progress that is outside time, and an expression of eternity.

Theosis is not a theological formula which we can choose to believe as a description of what happens to us after death; for the Orthodox, it begins here and now. It is a spirituality based on a theological reading of the Bible. Saint Paul emphasises (Romans 6.8; 2 Timothy 2.11f) that "since we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him". The tenses used here indicate that he is speaking of a spiritual dying of the Christian community in the present time and a new life and fellowship together now and in the future.

The nature of the spiritual journey is explained in this passage:

Deification teaches that salvation is not just an intellectual consent to an idea, not just an external or ethical imitation of Christ. Neither is it a solitary path to individual bliss. Rather, deification expresses human salvation as an inward process of transformation experienced within the life of the Church and leading to mystical union with God. As St. Basil put it, man is nothing less than a creature that has received the order to **become god**. (Jensen, 2005)

There is a need for the transformation of individual Christians and of the Church as community as a result of the Fall, which Orthodoxy takes seriously. The theology of the Eastern churches does not, however, stress the punitive consequences of humanity's fallen condition but rather places emphasis on the therapeutic value of this spirituality.

Paradise and Hell exist not in the form of a threat and a punishment on the part of God but in the form of an illness and a cure. Those who are cured and those who are purified experience the illuminating energy of divine grace, while the uncured and ill experience the caustic energy of God. (Vlachos, n.d.)

Theosis, thus, provides a "remedy" for our present human condition, which is alienation, and leads us to our true and original condition which is communion with God, in whose image and likeness we were created (Genesis 1.26).

Orthodoxy teaches that we have retained the image and lost the likeness, which must be restored to those who are redeemed in Christ – and this is a work of the Holy Spirit. In this life, then, Christians grow more and more into the likeness of God by Grace and also by co-operation. The twofold path to theosis involves God's Grace at work through the Holy Spirit and, through the energy of the indwelling Spirit, our participation in the work of the Risen Christ.

We become more like God as we participate more in the Divine nature by the life we live; for theosis involves taking on God's modes of activity – such as compassion – and does not mean sharing abstract attributes such as 'impassibility'. Theosis never means sharing God's Essence or Nature.

#### APPLICATION

What is the value of such abstruse theology to the ageing, one may ask? Hans Küng has asked the same question and given an unpromising answer:

But does a reasonable man *today* want to become God? What were stirring patristic slogans at that time – like "God became man so that man might become God" – are almost completely unintelligible today. The theme of an exchange between God and man (or between the two "natures"), highly relevant for Hellenistic hearers, means nothing at all to an age so sensitive as ours to the absence of God and "God's darkness". (Küng, 1985, p.42)

Our ministry, however, is not with Hans Küng's "reasonable man", but with ageing men and women who may be experiencing a need to move out of "God's darkness" – either a darkness of not having

been with God for many years, or a fearful darkness of the unknown future – into God’s light.

The ageing are a mixture of the learned and the ignorant, the rich and the poor, the demented and those of sound mind, the healthy and the sick; they are all these things and more! Some of them are people who in previous years have been leaders in society and in the church, in the fields of education, medical care and the rest of the social services.

Ageing now, they may feel they have “done their dash”, are now “past it” and “useless”, and that there is “no longer any point in living”. I have heard all these remarks made by older people; and I believe it is part of the task of those who minister with the ageing to give them a sense of continued worth and hopefulness.

But not all, by any means, are Christians. How can one introduce Christian spirituality to people who are unfamiliar with (or even nervous about) such words as God, sin, salvation, etc? An increasing number of people in the world today live in a personal world without religion and are easily able to imagine a world without religion.

My experience of the mystery that I call “God” is something that I cannot share directly with such people because they are coming from another direction in life. To speak to them in my categories of spiritual experience would perhaps be like trying to describe the song of a bellbird to someone who has never heard one sing.

There is an ancient proverb, *vocatus atque non vocatus, Deus aderit* (“bidden and unbidden, God is present”). I am convinced that everyone has such moments – brief episodes of the ineffable, the numinous. What those who will not acknowledge “God” experience in poetry, in nature, in beauty, and describe in terms of philosophy perhaps, is indeed a greater reality than the material world. Our task is to engage with them in that “spiritual” realm without any insistence on our preferred categories.

Together we are on a journey: from narrow to wider, where there are no fences, and even no horizon. Religion – even Christianity – is not the journey but only a set of signposts which seem to help some of us, but do not help everybody. We must be careful not to confuse the signposts with the journey. The journey involves both life experience and awareness: of self, of context, of mysteries; and of the way love unlocks them. There is no growth without tension and no life-skill is learned without pain. Darkness/shadow holds the promise of future growth.

People who have a difficulty with the divinity of Jesus have a difficulty with the idea of divinity within themselves. We can help them to see the sparks of divinity within – sparks of where we have come from,

and how to unwrap the truth of who we are. We can see an example of this in the following conversation. (This and the two subsequent examples are taken from encounters in my ministry which together have confirmed me in, and helped me to understand, the spirituality of theosis.)

### Finding the Right Words

I knew the family through the eldest daughter, C, who attended the church – no other family members were church-goers. The only son, R, was called up for military service and was killed in a shooting accident on the parade-ground. When the local army chaplain went to tell the family of R’s death, they phoned me. I went round and the chaplain left as I arrived.

The family – father, mother, C, her sister, and R’s wife – were, of course, distraught and their several distresses fed an extensive period of sobbing and weeping. Words, when they came, consisted mainly of platitudes: the self-comforting “the Lord only takes the best” (from R’s mother); the fatalistic “when your number’s up, your number’s up” (from R’s father).

This family’s reality was that none of them (C slightly, I guess) had any idea of how to reach for resources within themselves to cope, and I was their only accessible external resource. They did not know God and could not access God either “out there” or within themselves. It was clear they were looking to me as a saviour-figure – to provide explanations and answers.

My intuition at that time was to help them to find some inner spiritual reality on which they could draw in the days that lay ahead. I knew, however, that “god-language” would not have had any meaning for them (except, as I say, for C).

- S. Grief and shock binds us all together...  
Grief can’t sustain you.
- F. (Bitterly) What else is there?
- S. You all loved R. in different ways. That love can last; **will** last.
- F. I suppose while we have our memories.  
(A period of recalling special memories from R’s life)
- S. There is one common theme running through all those stories. It is what a lot of happiness R. gave you in different ways all throughout his life.
- F. Yes, he brought us such a lot of love right from when he was born.
- C. He must have got that from God. The Bible says ‘God is love’.
- F. God can’t love us very much, taking R. away from us like that!
- S. (Avoiding) R. hasn’t stopped loving you, just because he has gone away. And you haven’t stopped loving him, have you?
- (Reflective silence)
- S. (continues) God is here right now, I believe, grieving with us. “Whoever lives in love

lives in union with God, and God lives in union with him.” [1 John 4.16] I think that means that because R. was a loving person he now lives in union with God and, while we all continue to think of R. with love, so we also are in union with God and also with R.

(That was too “intellectual” for the family and the silence became uncomfortable. My ‘wordiness’ was partly the result of my own discomfort and inability to distance myself appropriately from the subject-matter because I had become over recent time a personal friend of all the family, and a regular in their home. Clearly another drink – coffee, or something stronger – was called for!)

(Later)

F. You know, I feel calm inside when we are all sitting here just thinking about him. It is as though he is here with us in spirit.

This piece of conversation opens with the family searching for meaning in the death of their son, husband and brother. There was no meaning for them in R’s death; but they found meaning for themselves in their grieving. They made sense of it themselves by our all being together with R in mind and being mutually supportive in a common grief over a most untimely death.

Following the funeral some days later, C. said to me that she and her mother had talked about what I said about R. being in union with God and how they felt they could understand being in union themselves when they remembered R. I did not ask whether “being in union themselves” meant in union with R. or in union with God. I doubt if C. could have answered that question – or even if the meaning would have been the same for her and her mother.

All the family, however, had made a journey away from festering grief to an understanding that their mutual love for R. bound them together as a family.

### A Meeting of Spirits

The ministry of the priest as pastor is to offer a vision of the Christian life which includes both a reflective understanding of God and God’s dealings with us and all creation, and also an attitude to the world which approaches it with reverence and humility day by day. As we have the expectation of meeting God on a daily basis in other people and in creation, why would we expect this ‘meeting’ to end with our death? We would only expect it to be enhanced! I think we see this in the next example.

(The next two examples, unlike the previous one, are with people who are quite able to talk openly about death and dying.)

B. I’m not afraid of dying at all – I’m quite ready for it in fact. It’s just...

S. It’s just?  
B. Well, I’m anxious about Harry. [her late husband]

(Silence)

B. How will I recognise him? You see, he was cremated.

S. Do you think a lot about Harry?

B. Oh, yes! I talk to him all the time – sometimes out loud – it’s as though he is still with me.

S. He is no longer with you physically, but he is still here.

B. Yes – even though he has now gone to be with God, his spirit is still here with me.

S. And when you go to be with God, your spirit will know Harry’s spirit – you will both be together in God.

B. (excitedly) Oh, that’s right! Yes, of course! Oh my dear, I hadn’t thought of it that way! Yes, yes; “God is Spirit”, it says so in the Bible, and our spirits will be together in heaven... Just like we are together now! Oh, that is so wonderful to know!

(And after this flourish of self-understanding, she sits and smiles looking distantly at ... what?)

John Swinton has spoken at this conference about the value of being recognised by an Other. Although at the outset she had asked how she would recognise her husband, was her fear really that she would not *be* recognised? I think here final words are an expression of confidence that there will be recognition – and it will be mutual. The context of the whole exchange from which this excerpt is taken is that B was able to move from a situation of “I’m missing him now”, to one where she was able to experience “knowing him again”.

### Spiritual Closeness to God

How does our ministry help people to see who Jesus is *now* as ‘Christ and Lord’? How is the Christ, Jesus, to be apprehended today and how do we ‘live in union with him’? How do we live ‘in peace’ rather than with fear and anxiety, and how do we live ‘in hope of sharing the glory of God’? (Romans 5.2) To refer again to the passage from the Colossians where Paul urges his readers to live their lives in union with Jesus, Paul is saying much more than ‘follow the example of the way of life of the Palestinian teacher and healer!’ Our ministry is not one of encouraging people to see to what extent they can live a life that resembles to some degree the life and ministry of that wandering sage – snake-handling, casting out demons, nor even to ‘go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation.’ (Mark 15.15ff)

I think this excerpt from a conversation with someone with whom I had developed a pastoral and spiritual relationship over several years illustrates the transition that can take place from anxiety to peace, and into a deeper understanding of union with God.

A. often anguished over the fact that her age (and her health) prevented her from doing the “mission” work to which she felt she was called.

- S. Do you think God is asking you **now** to go to Africa?
- A. I can’t go; I’m not well enough!
- S. Do you tell God that? Do you think God knows?
- A. Yes, God knows; so I don’t have to tell Him. But why do I have this strong sense of failure to respond? What does God want?
- S. Tell me about “this strong sense”.
- A. Well, I feel close to God – especially at my communions – and I want to be closer still. God has given me so much; God is so important in my life. I want to give something back to God. I would give myself to God gladly. But it’s my health. (sigh.)
- S. You have a **desire** to be closer to God?
- A. Oh, yes! To grow closer and closer all the time! And I believe I am doing – slowly but surely – as I keep to my obligations [*Mass and Confession*] as faithfully as I can.
- S. But there is a sense of something missing? There is something that God wants that is not clear to you?
- A. Something that I’m afraid of because I can’t understand it. I’m not afraid of the mission field – my health prevents that. No, I’m afraid of falling into God. (pause.)
- S. Falling into God?
- A. Something like – at communion I get carried away by it all, and I wonder ‘what if one day I’m carried away completely’. And then that thought breaks the intensity of the experience and I’m back in my pew.
- S. So you’re afraid of being carried away completely – of falling into God?
- A. Only because I don’t understand what it means and what it would be like. I think that is what happens when you die – your soul is carried away completely and I suppose you can say you ‘fall into God’ when you die.
- S. Perhaps your “strong desire” is God urging you to give yourself without fear to that experience of “falling into God” **now** – and not just when you die.

After this conversation, A. stopped talking about going to the “mission field”. She died very peacefully the following year.

The first and last lines of this excerpt stress the word ‘now’. It is important to focus on the present and to try to see how Christ is to be apprehended now, and how we are able to live in union with him in the present. This excerpt shows A. moving from anxiety to peace; and from the idea of earning God’s favour by “works” to accepting God’s gift of Grace.

## CONCLUSION

It is often said, “I’ll believe it when I see it!” We may turn this catchphrase around and it becomes “When I believe it, I’ll see it!” It is then an echo of Saint Anselm’s *credo ut intellegam*, (‘I believe in order that I may understand.’) As our ministry encourages people to *believe* that “God is love, and whoever lives in love lives in union with God and God lives in union with him” (1 John 4.18; Good News Bible), so will they come to experience its truth at a greater depth in their lives.

We may – and do – encounter God in an intensely personal way, so that we may express Saint John’s words by saying that “God is Love loving”. This, too, we will see when we believe it. An element of the minister’s spirituality must be so to engage with the ageing that they experience Love loving through our ministry. This requires a considerable spiritual maturity on the part of those who minister to the ageing.

People – ageing or not, yet – who have been brought up to see life as a time of testing, and that God only loves us if we live our lives in an approved way, will be helped to see life through different eyes if we minister with an image of God as unconditional Love.

It is instructive to think of Jesus and euthanasia together. Jesus did not die a good death by any human standards, and the story of his pain, suffering, and death are at the heart of the Christian faith. But they do not stand there alone! The Christian story has at its heart death *and* resurrection; and, though his death was preceded by pain and suffering, his resurrection was consummated in glory.

The birthright (baptism-right) of every Christian is equally death and resurrection. The death may follow even a prolonged period of pain and suffering, but it is not from the stoic bearing of this pain that salvation comes. (Even to describe it as ‘stoic’ speaks of a pagan philosophy.) What follows death – in the Christian hope – is resurrection. Through the waters of baptism we are raised to new life in Christ, through the gate of death we are raised to fullness of life in Christ. The ministry of pastors to the sick, the frail and the ageing is to journey with them with the twin banner of death *and* glory.

Euthanasia is part of a life-journey towards God; it is seeking God’s face. God has said “Seek ye my face” (Psalm 27.8) and the heart’s response is key to living life in ongoing prayer – which is relationship with God.

Living life in ongoing prayer – not *prayers* but spirituality – is a matter of practice and of applying ourselves to the task, but more a matter of Grace. We apply ourselves by exercising our ability to look and to notice how God is leading us; to be surprised

sometimes and always delighted at what God is doing in Grace; and to respond with gratefulness.

Spiritually, theosis involves selflessness. We meet God in Christ and, in the meeting – in the union – we know ourselves fully for the first time. We now know what it is we have been created for: the perfection of knowing Love, and that we are loved by Love and can make a response of love to Love. Knowing ourselves rooted in Christ day by day, and experiencing being built in Christ on a daily basis, gives us an inner stability – a spiritual firm foundation – that is impervious to the ‘changes and chances of this mortal life’.

The possibility of theosis means that we are called to nothing less than to bring perfection to God; that is, to grow more and more into the image and likeness of God, to become more the persons we were created to be, and to be so in harmony with God that we reflect all the fullness of God’s glory.

The fullness of God dwells in Christ, as the passage from Colossians says, and Christ dwells in us. We find our completion, our perfection, in that indwelling. We must live this not only intellectually and emotionally, but fully – and that is part of our ministry to the ageing. The pastor helps us to see that life – with its natural limits, which can include suffering and pain – is God’s gift to us who are created in the divine image; and points us to the person of Christ into whose Body we are incorporated by Baptism and into whose Glorious Body we will pass after death. Now we are growing towards it, we are experiencing theosis.

Let me conclude by referring again to Saint Peter’s understanding of salvation as “becoming partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1.4). Our Christian life – our spirituality – is essentially focussed both on the Incarnation of God in Christ and on the community of Persons in the Triune God. As God became ‘*en-sarkosis*’ in Christ, we become *en-theosis* also in Christ; and together we participate in the Divine *perichoresis*, doing the works of God in this life and growing in the experience of the communion revealed in God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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