
Orthodox Road

Rediscovering the Beauty of Ancient Christianity

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You Are Not Your Sexuality

The modern person is experiencing a bit of an identity crisis. There is a subconscious question being asked, “Is my sexuality an expression of my innermost being, of what it means to be human?” The marketing departments of large corporations and numerous publishers are pushing us to answer that question with a firm “Yes!”



We are worth far more money to them that way.

But what if the marketers, the publishers, and pop-culture have it wrong? What if our sexuality is quite insignificant to our humanity? Then it seems to me we would find that, as a culture, we have been traveling down the wrong road for quite some time. When traveling down the incorrect path, it is wise to stop and search for clearer direction before moving any further. Otherwise “progress” turns into regress.

FROM PERFECTION TO CORRUPTION

In order to understand our humanity and sexuality, we must understand from where we have come and to what point we are striving. Starting in Genesis, we see perfect man and woman made in the “image and likeness of God.” They were perfect, with the potential of *theosis*, but were not divine.

Eve was tempted by the serpent, not simply with delectable food, but with divinity. The serpent essentially tells her that eating of the fruit will make her a god, make her divine; that God is trying to hide something from her, but if she would eat this fruit then she will grasp divinity for herself and circumvent God.

As we all know, both Adam and Eve ate of the fruit and they

were not made divine by it. Quite the contrary. Mankind from that point forward found himself in the midst of corruption, decay, and death. Sin was the new master, and the ripple effects of sin brought all of creation into corruption with man.

God created mankind with the ability to reproduce because He foresaw that mankind would fall into sin. “The wages of sin is death...” (Rom. 6:23) because sin is the word we use to describe our separation from the Source of life. In order to preserve the human species and prevent it from becoming extinct, God gave us reproductive abilities. Some fathers of the church taught that if mankind had not fallen into sin, then God would have brought new humans by some other means.

FROM CORRUPTION TO DIVINITY

Fortunately, the story does not end with Genesis. For the sake of brevity, I will skip ahead.

Over the centuries, God gave His Law to the Israelites: directing, trying and testing them, lovingly scourging them when they would go astray. Finally, after centuries, He pruned His chosen people and brought forth one young maiden who was as close to human perfection as possible under the Law. She was a young Jewish virgin named Mary who, despite all risks to her life, humbly said yes to God when He revealed her

part in the plan of salvation.

At that moment, something happened that changed all of humanity forever. God wrapped Himself in flesh: the human nature and the divine nature commingled in one Person. Because of the incarnation, we are called to be “partakers in the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

God never rebuked Adam and Eve for yearning to move toward divinity. It was His plan all along. But we humans tried, and continue to try, to grasp divinity on our own. There is only one divine nature, and that belongs to the God in three Persons. He invites us to become a partaker in His divinity through entering the “Christ Life,” as CS Lewis called it when discussing *theosis*.

FURTHER UP AND FURTHER IN

So, we grasp the hands of Christ and fly upward with Him, leaving behind this world of decay and corruption to embrace divinity and glory. As divine creatures, we will never usurp God. We share in His divine nature by grace, as a gift, but not by right. He is still the Creator; we the creation. He is the self-existing One; we continuously borrow our existence from Him.

As long as we commune with Him, we continue to flow in this river of divinity that issues from His being.

BECOMING AS ANGELS

One day, our Lord said about our future resurrected state, “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven” (Matt. 22:30). From this statement, I think we can ascertain that all of those things that are inconsequential, that are accidentals to our humanity, will cease to exist. Our death will act as a fire when purifying precious metal; it burns away that which is useless and, in the age to come, the true essence of our humanity will burst forth with brilliance in the resurrection.

We “shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more” (Rev. 7:16) because the *need* for food is part of our fallen state. As much as we enjoy eating, it is in order to maintain a corruptible body that is slowly winding down and perishing. Eternally receiving God in our inward being will be our perfect food. Sleep will not be necessary either.

As our Lord plainly states in the passage quoted above, sexuality will no longer be part of our humanity. Again, it is here mostly to preserve the human race from drifting into extinction.

For this reason, the Apostle Paul in First Corinthians chapter seven teaches that marriage is good, but virginity is better. God made sex and does not condemn it, but chastity is even greater.

Neither is bad, both are good, but one is better. To devote oneself toward the calling of *theosis* is the epitome of being human. Such a person finds their life hidden in Christ (Col. 3:3).

SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE

Those who find themselves in marriage need not despair. We are called to be a living icon, a loving image of the eternal Groom and Bride, that is Christ and His Church.

When attempting to communicate their unspeakably beautiful communion with God, some saints such as St. Symeon the New Theologian used the word “eros,” which is sometimes interpreted as erotic love. It is a love that is so intimate that it makes two things as though they were one. Such a deep love is what numerous saints and ordinary laypeople have experienced with God.

The Christian marriage is an icon of this love. When everything is functioning normally, the marital union produces fruit, which is symbolic for the grace and life conceived in the Christian soul that deeply communes with God.

THE WRONG PATH

When we attempt to find happiness, dignity, or self-worth through sex, we are traveling down the wrong road. You are not your sexuality, as I once told a friend. The sexual nature in us, as strong as it may be at times, is a temporary part of our nature that will fade away. We cannot express who we truly are through our sexuality, because our true nature finds its most exalted state in the divine union with God.

Those who attempt to explore their humanity through sexuality become slaves of pop-culture's values, corporation's marketing departments, and, ultimately, spirits of darkness.

TWO SHINING EXAMPLES

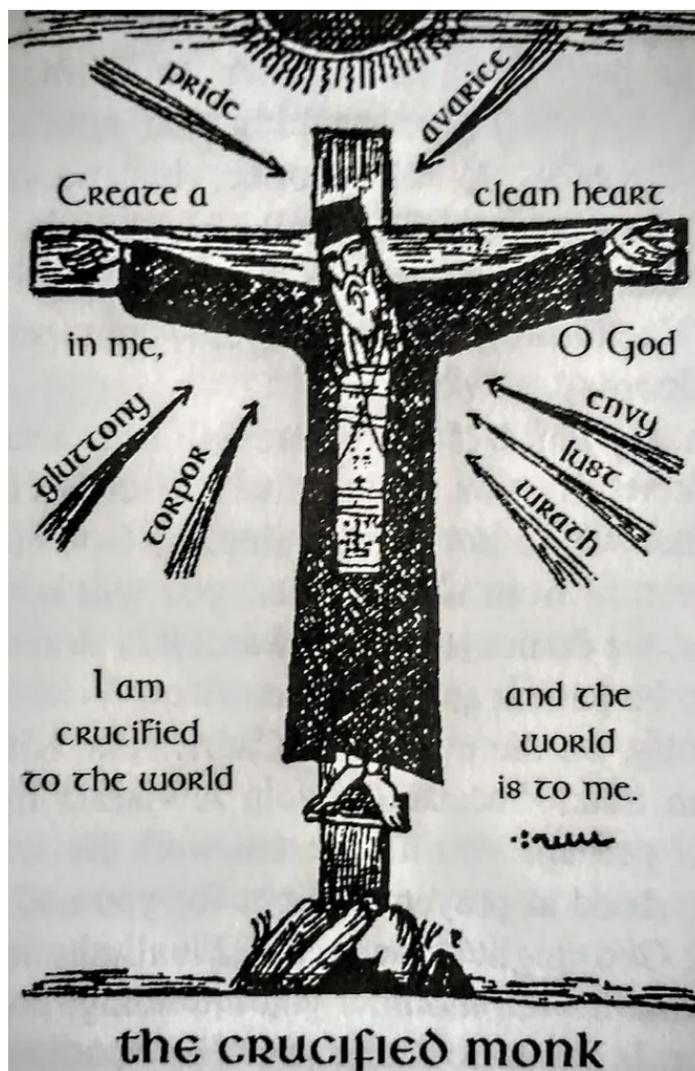
I can think of no two better examples of what it means to be truly human than the Theotokos (Virgin Mary) and our Lord Jesus Christ. The ever-virgin Mary carried God within her womb and is the highest example of what it means to be a Christian: one who has so humbly dedicated herself to God that she carries God within her at all times. This is our lofty calling.

Christ, too, lived a life of perpetual virginity. The two persons – male and female – who were virgins their entire lives are the highest examples ever of what it means to be human. They missed out on nothing. We should desire to be like them in every possible way because they show us what it means to be

truly human.

FROM THE CROSS TO GLORY

There are numerous people who struggle with sexual addictions, same sex attraction, or who feel like they were born into the wrong gender. Sadly, these people have been lied to by our culture which tells them that by attempting to find their identity in their sexuality, they will live freely. Conversely, by stifling it, they will never truly be themselves.



Such a life only results in slavery. Our sexuality is no more part of our intrinsic humanity than our favorite flavor of pizza. But many people feel as though the Church hates them or that it rejects their identity because of their mistaken placement of personhood. Granted, there have been many bigoted Christians, and that is a problem we Christians need to address.

On the whole, though, I feel that many Christians are accepting toward people in the LGBTQ community, as we should be. By loving the person, but refusing to accept their misplaced identity, we are calling them to spiritual heights. It may be that they will struggle with these sexual issues their whole life, though through grace, they should find that the burden becomes more bearable.

I truly believe that if such a person dedicates themselves to inward prayer, asceticism, and humility as taught in Orthodoxy, they will find grace deeper than most of us will ever know in this life. In the future age, they will shine brighter than many others because of the cross they bore with patience and love.

May God help all of us in this culture that is sexually broken and distorted.

Endnotes:

*Rainbow photo by a friend of mine. Photo of the monk on the cross comes from *Monastic Wisdom* by Elder Joseph the Hesychast.

*It is not my intention to say that there will be absolutely no eating in the age to come. My argument is that it will not be a

necessary bodily function in order to stay alive since we'll be in incorruptible bodies. The same with sleep: there will certainly be divine rest, but all things will be different then.

Published by Fr. Jeremy

I grew up Protestant, but found my home in the ancient Orthodox Church while in my 20's. I'm now an Orthodox priest encouraging others to deepen their walk with Christ.
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