



TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME HOMILY (B)

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Deification of Men

Why did God take my friend? Why do they innocent suffer death?
Why does God kill? How does God intervene at the moment of
greatest distress for us?

In Christian theology, God works to make us like himself in his
Divine Plan. He does so through a process known as *theosis*,
which is the transforming effect of divine grace. This concept of
salvation is historical and fundamental for Christian understanding
that is prominent in both the Eastern Orthodox Church and
Roman Catholic Church,

St. Irenaeus of Lyons states it best that God "became what we
are in order to make us what he is himself." Or in another of his
writings he says, "God passed into man so that man might pass
over to God."

St. Peter explicitly speaks of becoming "partakers of the Divine nature". Closely allied are the teachings of Paul the Apostle that through the Spirit we are sons of God. St. Paul conceives of the resurrection as immortalization in conformity to the divine Christ. He also envisions believers as gaining superhuman power over the world, angels, and Satan. Clearly both immortality and power are ingredients of what makes God, God. Christians do not become independent gods but are conformed to Christ's deity. We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another". As Saint Athanasius so eloquently put it: "The Word became flesh ... that we, partaking of his Spirit, might be deified"

The Fathers spoke of the process of deification as begun, at least in foreshadowing, in baptism, and so as already effected in the baptized. Clement of Alexandria wrote: "Being baptized, we are illuminated; illuminated we become sons; being made sons, we are made perfect; being made perfect, we are made immortal.

"Like a Ship Sailing Home"

Found in the dead soldier's shirt pocket, over his heart, a newspaper clipping which the young man had apparently always carried with him. His buddy opened it, read it and cried again. The

clipping said so much about what his friend believed about death and life.

So, he sent the clipping home to the dead soldier's parents, that they might be comforted by what their son believed, that his faith might help strengthen their faith, the clipping read something like this.

"We are standing on a shore. A large sailing ship is about to pull out. Friends and relatives of ours are standing on the deck, waving goodbye, throwing streamers, calling to us, calling our names. And we call to them and to each other. 'Look, there's Grandma...there's Uncle Joe...there's Uncle Bill.' A bell sounds. The ships begins to move away.

"We stand silently for a very long time and watch as the ship goes further and further away until, finally, the mast is just a vertical pencil line on the distant horizon. Then it too goes down, until we can no longer see it. And we sigh, 'Oh, he's gone.'

"But gone from where? Gone from our sight. That's all.

"For at the very moment we sigh, 'Oh, he's gone,' another cried on another shore is jumping up and down, laughing and yelling and pointing excitedly out to sea saying, 'Look! He's coming.

Look, the ship is coming home! Look! There's Grandma...there's Uncle Joe...there's Uncle Bill.'"

The ship is coming home. There is another shore, another dimension in which we have already begun to live. We are filled with the Spirit of our Risen Savior—forever. Such is the journey of our soul. We are called to immortality; we are called to partake in the divinity of the Trinity, and we are called into Heaven where death is forever defeated by eternal love. Be at peace my brothers and sisters and behold the God who comes to take us home.