



THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE
FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STUDIES

CONTINUING EDUCATION

PROTOPRESBYTER DR DORU COSTACHE

THE ORTHODOX FAITH

WAYS OF KNOWING GOD

FOURTH LECTURE: THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

RECAPITULATING THE RELEVANT INFORMATION

- ▶ “the Holy Spirit ... spoke through the prophets” (Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed)
- ▶ “when the Comforter comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me” (John 15:26)
- ▶ God speaks within our hearts through the Spirit (Romans 8)
- ▶ The Spirit guides us towards the fullness of the truth (John 16)

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Lecture outlines
 - ▶ The work of the Holy Spirit
 - ▶ Knowing God through the mystical experience
 - ▶ Knowing God in the assembly of the saints

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ The work of the Holy Spirit
 - ▶ The invocation of the Spirit is central to Orthodox devotion
 - ▶ Liturgical invocation: "send down your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts presented"
 - ▶ Daily prayer: "Heavenly king, Comforter, the Spirit of truth, present everywhere and filling all things, the treasury of good and giver of life, come and dwell in us and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, gracious one."

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ The work of the Holy Spirit
 - ▶ The work of the Spirit permeates the creation's continuum: Genesis 1:2 (hovering the waters); Genesis 2:7 (breath of life); Matthew 3:16-17 (Jordan); John 3:5-6 (spiritual rebirth); John 4:14 (life eternal within); Acts 2 (Pentecost); Romans 8:15-16 (children of God); Revelation 22:1-2 (the river and the tree of life)
 - ▶ Spirit-led divine knowledge: Joel 2:28-32 (prophecy); John 16:13 (leading to the whole truth)

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Knowing God through the mystical experience
 - ▶ Luke 24:30-32 – apostolic burning hearts
 - ▶ Saint Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit* 9 – the Spirit known to all, but differently
 - ▶ The 'Macarian' homilies – a heart-felt presence of the Spirit

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Knowing God through the mystical experience
 - ▶ The saints and their way of knowing God
 - ▶ Divinely-taught (Saint Antony the Great)
 - ▶ Divinely-inspired (Saint Ephrem the Syrian)
 - ▶ Spirit-bearers (Saint Symeon the New Theologian)

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Knowing God through the mystical experience
 - ▶ The saints and their way of knowing God in the teaching of Saint Gregory Palamas on the uncreated energies
 - ▶ “although the divine is [present] in all and participated by all, it [truly abides] in the saints only and is truly participated only by them.” (*Divine Participation* 10)
 - ▶ “If the deifying gift of the Spirit [bestowed upon] the saints is created, like some natural feature or resemblance, ... even though deified the saints could not transcend nature and would not be born of God.” (*Divine Participation* 2)

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Knowing God through the mystical experience
 - ▶ The hesychast way of knowing God
 - ▶ More recent examples of Spirit-led saints
 - ▶ Saint Seraphim of Sarov
 - ▶ Saint Silouan the Athonite
 - ▶ Father John the Stranger
 - ▶ The prayerful way – calling on Jesus, one receives the Spirit

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Knowing God in the assembly of the saints
 - ▶ The liturgical space and the profession of the faith: doctrinal statements
 - ▶ The liturgical space and the proclamation of the Gospel: readings and sermon
 - ▶ The liturgical space as a hermeneutical framework: the double structure of the liturgy; ritual asceticism; hymns

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Knowing God in the assembly of the saints
 - ▶ The thankful way of knowing God
 - ▶ The eucharistic *anaphora* (offering) prayer: "It is proper and right to sing to you, to bless you, to praise you, to give thanks to you, to worship you in every place of your dominion. For you are God inexpressible, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever existing, ever the same; you and your only-begotten Son and your Holy Spirit. You brought us from non-being into being, and when we fell you raised us up again, and left nothing undone until you brought us up to heaven and bestowed on us your kingdom to come. For all these things we give thanks to you and your only-begotten Son and your Holy Spirit, and for all the benefits known and unknown, seen and unseen, that have been granted to us." (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia)

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Knowing God in the assembly of the saints
 - ▶ The transformative way of knowing God in the Spirit
 - ▶ The eucharistic *epiclesis* (invocation) prayer: "...we ask you and entreat you and implore you: send down your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts..." (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia)

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

▶ Wisdom

- ▶ We can know God given that God speaks to us through the Spirit
- ▶ The most direct divine knowledge is experiential – eucharist, prayer and the saints' mystical participation in the life of God
- ▶ Led by the same Spirit and guided by the testimonies of the saints, we can know God no less certainly in the assembly of the saints

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT, THE EXPERIENCES OF THE SAINTS AND THE ECCLESIAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Next lecture: Tradition and the Authentication of Divine Knowledge

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