

Raimon Panikkar: Christophany

The life that was present in Jesus is the same life we can experience in the risen Christ. Christophany is both the process and the reality of Christ becoming the fullness of human life.

“Faith in Christ does not depend on the latest papyri found at the Dead Sea. Like John, we too can ‘hear,’ ‘see,’ ‘observe,’ and ‘touch’ the Word of Life.”

“If we do not know the experience of Jesus, we cannot even know the experience of Peter, Paul, and the first Christians.”

The value of tradition...

Tradition is the venue for the transmission of experience of the risen Christ:

“The ‘transmission’ of tradition is not limited to producing a version of scriptures that is correct, in proper form, and up-to-date. What tradition transmits is life, faith, a sense of belonging to a community, an orientation of life, a participation in a common destiny. Christian tradition is not doctrine alone; it is also ‘ecclesia’ [a community God has gathered] in the deepest sense of the word. It has to do not only with what Jesus said and did but with who he was and who we are.”

Christian life and faith are based on experience...

“It has always been said that faith is a gift, but we should keep in mind that those who receive it must also be conscious of its reception. Such a consciousness is neither a doctrinal evidence nor a rational conviction; it is an experience of truth (1 John 1:1-3)...The one who makes this assertion makes it because she has ‘seen’ something—she has had an experience—not because she has learned something in a classroom lesson...At the basis of faith, therefore, is an experience of union...In this instance it is not a question of mere psychological experience, but of an ontological ‘touch,’ so to speak. It is an experience that transforms our entire being; we have a feeling that we have been taken over by a stronger reality that penetrates and transforms us.”

Consciousness of Christ’s presence in us transforms our consciousness of life...

- To live in Christ presumes our consciousness of the one whose life we become
- Our consciousness of Christ opens the flow of Christ’s consciousness (mind) into our being and living
- Panikkar translates Philippians 2:5 differently from the NRSV. (“Have the same mind in you that was in Christ Jesus” NRSV) His translation is more accurate: “Have in yourselves the same sentiments [a consciously lived experience] that is yours in Christ Jesus.”
- According to Panikkar, consciousness is something that is immediately present and fills a person’s awareness; it is experience, not thought. Consciousness is about being, not thinking.
- Christ-consciousness is embodying the lived experience of Jesus; it is sharing his view of reality. In other words, have in yourselves the consciously lived experience that is yours in Christ Jesus.

Christness

Wisdom from the ancient abba, Dorotheos of Gaza (6th century) and a modern abba, Raimon Panikkar (21st century)

Our original nature:

Abba Dorotheos of Gaza in his *Discourse on Renunciation* declares that our original nature is goodness, reflecting the image of God in our manner of life. This is our true identity, our true self.

Sin is a form of identity theft:

Abba Dorotheos declares that sin is a habitual state of living contrary to our true nature. We replace our true self with a false self created by our unrestrained ego. We make ourselves in our own image.

Repentance is turning toward a restoration of our original nature:

Healing and transformation of the false self begins with a desire for reorientation (repentance) and renewal of our heart to our true self through the power of Jesus Christ. As Abba Dorotheos declares: *“For he renewed humankind in his nature, restored the depraved senses and sensibility of human nature to what it had been in the beginning...”*

Submitting control our lives to the unconditional love of God restores our original nature:

Jesus exhorts us to “die to self” in order to “find our self.” Raimon Panikkar, a Roman Catholic priest, mystic, and philosopher calls this form of letting go “The Discipline of the Three Silences.” (from his book *The Experience of God: Icons of the Mystery*) In order to find our true self we must listen and root ourselves in experience of God through silence:

- The silence of the intellect (letting go of analytical thought)
- The silence of the will (letting go of control of the outcome)
- The silence of action (letting go of efforts to make something happen)

These three silences offer temporary withdrawal from the conventional patterns of our lives that will give us a new perspective (consciousness) on life and will become the womb of compassion. By letting go of control of our lives we experience and share life in its fullness (Christness). By letting go of attachment to control and material desires we experience a reorientation of our hearts to what is most fundamental: love. Dorotheos calls this “purity of heart” and Panikkar calls it “Christness.” Our original nature is to embody God’s love. Panikkar exhorts the Church to move from an emphasis on “Christianity” to Christness.