

AGING *in His Grace*

ST. BENEDICT ORTHODOX CHURCH
3808 Old Seymour Rd ✉ 940-692-3392
Rev. Fr. Peter Kavanaugh



WEEK 3~ *Gerotranscendence and Theosis*

I. Review: The Theory of Gerotranscendence

- “The enlightened maturity which, at very best, accompanies the process of aging, or rather the process of living, might be described as a shift in Metaperspective – from a materialistic and rational perspective to a more cosmic and transcendent one, normally followed by an increase in life satisfaction.” ~ Tornstam

II. Judaism and the Elderly

- “With the ancient is wisdom, and in length of days understanding.” ~ Job 12

III. The Historical Church

- A “true widow” is one who has “her hope set on God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day” ~I Timothy 5:4
- “That aged men be temperate, grave, sober-minded, sound in faith, in love, in patience. Aged women likewise be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good” ~ Titus 2:2-3
- “We honor the grey hair, not because we esteem the white color above the black, but because it is a proof of a virtuous life...for the old head is then venerable, when it acts worthily of the grey hair; but when it plays youth, it will be more ridiculous than the young.” ~ St. John Chrysostom

IV. Reaching for Theosis

- Theosis, our vocation: The process of participating in God’s energies, becoming transformed into a “new creation” and a “son of God.”
- **Scriptures:** 2 Peter 1:4; Ephesians 4:11-13
- “The Son has become like us by the incarnation...we become like Him by theosis, by partaking of the divinity in the Holy Spirit, who communicates the divinity to *each* human person in a particular way.” ~ Vladimir Lossky
- “Being filled with the fullness of God.” ~ John Wesley
- Theosis is like an acorn. Embodied within that acorn is the unrealized potential for a tree. It needs proper soil, water, and sunlight to reach its potential. So do we...
- Gerotranscendence can be looked at through the lens of Christian theosis

V. From Theory to Practice

- If Gerotranscendence & Theosis are like seeds needing water, how then can they be watered?
- Theosis requires: Work and Transcendence

VI. “Work Out Your Salvation”

- “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” ~ Matthew 5:48
- The Church Fathers describe two paths: active and contemplative

VII. Martha & The Active Way: A Parallel with Young Adulthood

- Martha served God by doing stuff
- This resembles the first half of adulthood in mainstream society
- We have all kinds of things TO DO. These will be judged by our interior disposition
- But our culture doesn’t place much value on the contemplative path

VIII. Mary & The Contemplative Path: A Parallel to Old Age

- Mary withdrew from exterior busyness and productivity.
- “The one who wears a white habit and has the spirit of obedience, humility and purity, he is the true monk of interiorized monasticism.” ~ St. Tikhon
- Old age brings us to a monastic lifestyle – slowing down, going within...

IX. Exile or Pilgrimage

- “Leaving a world entails entering another...The ascetics considered the desert to be an intermediary zone between the profane world and the Kingdom. Exile became the pilgrimage of the homo viator, man the traveler, seeking his heavenly origins.” ~ Fr. Paul Evodikomiv
- “Older people who no longer have the energy to be engaged with many activities may have other ‘work’ to do, the work of coming to a sense of their final life-meanings, and the process of self-transcendence that accompanies this.” ~ Elizabeth MacKinlay

X. “Getting Old is Not For Sissies”

- Getting old is a heavy cross. But it is a cross that can bear fruits just as the fruits of the first cross.
- Old Age is very similar to monasticism: Vow of Poverty, Chastity & Obedience
- “A healthy man is always an earthly, material man...But as soon as he falls ill, and the normal, earthly order of his organism is disturbed, then the possibility of another world makes itself known to him at once.” ~ Dostoyevsky
- If we peer through this lens, we can discover a possibility for a wonderful transformation in the twilight of our life.