

## Thoughts on love and perfectionism

*From the Blog of Michael Haldas*

“In Matthew 5:48 Jesus says, “And be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.” The word “perfect” translates *teleios* and is certainly not incorrect. However, in modern English, “perfect” generally carries only a meaning of moral perfection. As such, it is a verse that sort of grinds us into the dust as we languish in our sins and failures. Who can be perfect? The verse takes on a very different meaning, though, if *teleios*, is given a more proper translation. “Be whole, as your heavenly Father is whole.” “Be complete...” or most especially, “Be what your heavenly Father created you to be just as He is Who He is from eternity.” The oppression lifts, and the good news radiates into our hearts.” (Father Stephen Freeman)

“ “We should show great diligence, not to fall away from the perfection which is attainable, but to acquire as much as is possible: To that extent let us make progress within the realm of what we seek. For the perfection of human nature consists, perhaps in its very growth in goodness.’...The perfection which is attainable for us is not some heavenly pinnacle or plateau above which we cannot go higher. The attainable perfection is offering as much love as we can or are gifted to give. There is no ‘canon’ or measuring stick which can determine this, for it is always possible to do more or to move to an even higher level of spirituality. We may believe that we can do no more, that is human to come to such a conclusion, but we are called to love and struggle to the same degree that Christ did and does...’ (St. Gregory of Nyssa, Fr. Ted Bobosh)

“...human beings may be brought to perfection, to a maturity in which they can truly know God; and...this perfecting of the creature at the same time manifests the workings of God, displaying His goodness and justice.” (Fr. John Behr)

“God could have created human beings perfect or as “gods” from the beginning, for all things are possible to him. However, created things, by virtue of being created, are necessarily inferior to the One who created them, and so fall short of the perfect: they are of a later date, infantile (St. Irenaeus depicts Adam and Eve as infants), and so unaccustomed to, and unexercised in, perfect conduct. Yet, as it is possible for a mother to give an infant solid food, so also God could have made human beings “perfect” from the beginning, but they, still in their infancy, could not have received this perfection...All created beings are limited, and what is limited cannot be perfect. Created beings are given the possibility of striving toward perfection.” (Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica, Fr. John Behr)