

Thoughts on the relationship between love and true knowledge

From the blog of Michael Haldas

“Love is first among all the activities connected with virtue and all the commandments of the law. If, therefore, the soul ever attains this love, it will need none of the others, having reached the fullness of its being. It seems that love alone preserves in itself the character of the divine blessedness. And knowledge becomes love because what is known is by nature beautiful.” (St. Macrina)

“The crisis of our loneliness is, I think, two-fold. It is the lack of intimacy on the one hand (surrounded by information gatherers). It is also a crisis of vulnerability (humility) in which we fear to be known, for ever-so-many reasons. Intimacy is something of a dance. It requires a gift, for the knowledge that comes from love can only be made available freely and as a gift. The gift requires love in order to be received. For what can be known in intimacy can only be known through love. It dissipates in the hands of anything else. St. Paul, summarizing his amazing 13th chapter from his first Corinthian letter (the chapter of love), says this: “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” 1 Cor. 13:12.” (Father Stephen Freeman)

“St. Paul’s comments that ‘knowledge puffs up’ is not an anti-intellectual comment. Rather, he is placing ‘knowledge’ on a scale of values with love being the highest virtue. He is advocating that when Christians speak to each other (or debate with each other), they remember that all they do and say should be governed by love (1 Corinthians 16:14). “And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:2). One can know all Christian dogmas, know all the rubrics of the Church, know theology as a trained scholar, know how to practice asceticism perfectly, but if one doesn’t have Christ’s love for others, all that knowledge will amount to nothing. Christians aren’t just to win arguments through knowledge, they are to win hearts through love. Without love, as St. Paul says, a person of knowledge will just become overbearing and arrogant.” (Fr. Ted Bobosh)

“Experiencing the love of God enables us to comprehend “the width and length and depth and height” (Eph 3:18) of Christ’s nature and His life among us. These dimensions include the width of God’s love for all men; the length to which the Lord is willing to go for us, even to death on the Cross; the depth of God’s humility in Christ; and the height of His exaltation above “every name that is named” (Eph 1:21). Finally, because the saints know “the love of Christ which passes knowledge,” they are “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:19). We ourselves are incomplete, unable to know the mind of God, powerless to see fully. And yet God, who is omniscient and unlimited, created us to become the dwelling place of His presence. He intends for us to receive the salvation He bestows: wisdom, power, insight, “the riches of His glory” Eph 3:16).” (Dynamis 10/13/2021)

“We are able to love as Christ loves when we know and accept the love of God. It is like a candle. Candlewax is solid and hard until it warmed with a flame. But then it became soft, then liquid. The wax flows, and it gives itself to the burning of the fire. So also, the love of Christ melts our hearts so that they burn with love, burn not only for Him but for everyone and everything without distinction. And in that burning, we offer ourselves to bring the light of God to the world around us.” (Fr. Basil)