

Dr. Papanikolaou- Lesson 18

Big Question: How can I relate to the created world in such a way that draws me closer to God?

Key Points

Teachers should understand these few, key points before the lesson, and students should take these points away from the class.

- A. Creation is ultimately a good thing. It not an enemy of God. It is a bearer of God's presence in the world.
- B. We're all interconnected. As Christians, we have to relate to one another and to the world in such a way that the presence of the divine is untapped.
- C. The Eucharist is an example of this relationship. Humans take basic elements, like bread and wine, elements given to us by God, and we give them back to God. In that act of giving back, we're somehow transformed into the Body of Christ, even if it's just for a moment.
- D. The Church should not just be reduced to the institutions: to the bishops, the monasteries, our camps and programs. The Church is, actually, the Eucharist.
- E. The Fathers of the Ecumenical councils were so devoted to affirming Christ's humanity because they knew that if people didn't know that God had full contact with humanity, they also wouldn't realize all that God has given them and all the good things that are possible.

Review

Ask students:

1. What did we learn last class? Review your notes and rewrite a key point or takeaway that you found significant. If you were absent, your job is to review the student guide from last class and then ask your fellow students questions about the points they're about to share.

Give them 3 or so minutes to review and write, then ask them:

- Share what you've written (go around the room systematically to get feedback)
- Then ask students who were absent last class: do you have any questions they have about their points? Students may not be able to answer their questions, and that's okay. You can affirm the question, and if it's easy to answer yourself, do so. And if not, say "We'll hold on to that question to see if it's answered in any of the future classes."

Finally, review any key points from last class that were missed, especially if they are really important for this upcoming lesson.

Opening Reflection

- Tell your students about the "big question" for the day.
- Then, direct them to the following excerpt from the Akathist Hymn, "Glory to God for All Things."

- This hymn was written by a priest, Father Gregory Petrov, who was martyred in a Soviet prison camp in the 1940's.
2. Pull evidence from the hymn in order to answer the following question: How can I relate to the created world in such a way that draws me closer to God?

Kontakion 5

The dark storm clouds of life bring no terror to those in whose hearts Thy fire is burning brightly. Outside is the darkness of the whirlwind, the terror and howling of the storm, but in the heart, in the presence of Christ, there is light and peace, silence: Alleluia!

Ikos 5

I see Thine heavens resplendent with stars. How glorious art Thou radiant with light! Eternity watches me by the rays of the distant stars. I am small, insignificant, but the Lord is at my side. Thy right arm guides me wherever I go.

Glory to Thee, ceaselessly watching over me

Glory to Thee for the encounters Thou dost arrange for me

Glory to Thee for the love of parents, for the faithfulness of friends

Glory to Thee for the humbleness of the animals which serve me

Glory to Thee for the unforgettable moments of life

Glory to Thee for the heart's innocent joy

Glory to Thee for the joy of living

Moving and being able to return Thy love

Glory to Thee, O God, from age to age

Preparation for Lecture

- Let's turn to Dr. Papanikolaou for some more reflection on these themes.
 - Encourage students to take notes in their student guide as they watch and listen to the video clip. Tell them that you will discuss the lecture afterwards.
3. Fill in points Dr. Papanikolaou makes in this video clip.
 - a. Creation is ...
 - b. The Eucharist is important because ...
 - c. The Church is not ...
 - d. The Church is, actually, ...
 - e. The Fathers of the Ecumenical councils were so devoted to affirming Christ's humanity because ...

Reflection on Video

- In order to experience the Eucharist, people take the gifts of God, we work with them, and we offer them back to God.
 - More specifically: God gives us wheat and grapes, and we use our God-given human creativity in order to make these into bread and wine. Then, we offer the bread and wine back to God, and he blesses them so that they become the Body of Christ.
4. With this knowledge, reflect upon this: What do you do, or what don't you do, that is Eucharistic?
 5. What gifts have you been given? (Think broadly here -- physical objects, circumstances, relationships, talents -- these all count as gifts.)
 6. How do you or can you use your God-given human creativity in order to improve these gifts? How do you or can you offer the gifts and your work back to God?
 7. What does a eucharistic "attitude" look like (i.e. thankfulness).
 8. Think back on this whole unit. What do you want to remember most for your life? Put another way, what do you want written on your heart?

Close with any of the key points that they might not have addressed in their own sharing/discussion.

At this point, you may choose to hand out the "Key Points" summary page for this lesson.