

## THE BIRTH IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD AND GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

Christianity appeared in history not as a new religion but as the proclamation of a new way of life. Transforming its existence from a mortal biological individuality to a personal relationship, to live as a relationship of love and communion of life with the members of a body which is the Church.

Christianity is not yet another ideology of individual beliefs, of a morality consisting of individual merit.

The Gospel - the good news - proclaimed by the Christian Church throughout human history, concerns the possibility for man to transcend death, to be freed from the limitations of his mortal nature.

This proclamation was a Revelation. A revelation not in the sense of an unprovable supernatural information regarding the existence of God and the spiritual world, but rather in the sense of an experienced testimony, revealing the possibility of man's victory over death. This experienced testimony confirms the reality of a historical event: at a special time and place, the historical person Jesus Christ incarnates this revealing existential possibility; namely, that man can exist in the manner of the uncreated nature of God.

The Church does not invite people to simply accept this with their minds, nor does it ask for a faith that intellectually submits to a supernatural fact. The Church subjects this testimony to the experience of the first eyewitnesses of the manifestation of God in the person of Christ and invites people to participate in their existence and through their experience in this what was confirmed and attested by the eyewitnesses: "1 That which existed from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we were permitted to

behold and our hands to touch with regard to the Word of Life: 2 ye verily, Life hath appeared, and we have seen it; and we bear witness and bring unto you the message of eternal Life, which was with the Father, and hath appeared unto us: 3 whatsoever therefore we have seen and heard, that also we proclaim unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us: and our fellowship is with the Father, and with Jesus Christ his Son. 4 And we write of this, that our joy may be made perfect (1 John 1:1-4).

This Proclamation comes to us in human language as the experience of the young Church; this language is logical and understandable. It is a proclamation and a clarification of her experience as a presupposition for he or she who wants to participate in this experience. But acquiring knowledge of a proclamation cannot replace experience. This is the basis for the 'apophatic' way of approaching the mystery of God: to describe it in a negating or negative way. Hence 'apophaticism' is the refusal to exhaust truth in its formulation or yet the description of truth does not exhaust truth. Formulation indicates, suggests, describes, but does not define, as in iconography. The three angels on the icon painted by Saint Andrei Rublev 'refer' to the Trinity.

God is the creator of the world, but no reason can interpret the way the material and bounded is derived from the immaterial and unlimited or how the mortal and perishable is derived from the immortal and immortal.

The 'kerygma' or proclamation of the Church recounts the path from divine existence to the historical person of Christ. God does not remain unknowable and inaccessible in His essence, but He is revealed in Christ, in a personal existence. With the presence of Christ in history, the Church affirms the personal ecstasy of God, His existential freedom in relation to His uncreated nature. In Christ, He personifies not only Himself but also created man. The good news of the Church is based on this first revelation: the initial principle of what exists, the event of existence in

itself, is not a natural, rational or any necessity, but only personal freedom.

With the presence of Christ in history, the experience of the Church knows the personal identity of God as an existential reference to a second divine person. Christ is the Son and Logos of God the Father; He does not live for Himself, He does not seek autonomy, His existence is a witness and manifestation of the Father's person. This witness becomes accessible in the experience of the Church, through the intervention of a third person: the Spirit of God, the Comforter. The Spirit activates the testimony of the Logos, not as mere information about God the Father, but as a life-creating possibility, accessible to every personal existence, that accepts to be adopted.

God exists because He is the Father, the one who freely affirms His will to exist, through the Son and the Spirit. He exists because He loves, and love is an event of freedom. His existence is a communion of love. The experience of the Church gives just this definition of God: God is love; that which God is, is love; God is like love; the mode of being of God is love.

Source: C. Yannaras, *The meaning of reality*, Sebastian Press & Indiktos, Los Angeles 2011

Father Dominique, 20 December 2023