



Are We Actually *gods*?

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It is sadly ironic that the sniper in the recent Washington DC killings left a note saying that he was **god**! Saint John in the first chapter verse 12 of the Holy Gospel wrote “*But as many as received Him (the Lord Jesus Christ), to them He gave the right to become the children of God.*” And Psalm 86: 6-7 reads, “*You are **gods** and all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.*”

The Lord Jesus Christ used verse 6 to answer the Jews who were accusing Him of blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God (John 10: 3). Saint Paul in Romans 8: 29 states that the Lord Jesus Christ is “*firstborn among many brethren.*” Also in Acts 17: 28 Saint Paul says, “*For we are His (Christ) offspring.*” And God in Genesis 1: 26 says “*Let us make man in Our Image, according to Our likeness.*” Saint Athanasius the Apostolic wrote in his book ‘On the Incarnation’, “*For the Son of God became man so that we might become God.*” And the Church fathers stressed that the goal of the Christian journey is to be made divine, to the likeness of God as far as possible. All these quotes claim that we are **gods**!

But are the offspring of God **gods**? Are we actually **gods**? These are very hard questions that Christians always ponder, especially when faced daily with our weaknesses. His Holiness Pope Shenouda III many times stressed that we are not literally **gods**, that we do not have the nature of God, not yet at any rate. God is an eternal spirit except for the 33 years the Person of the Son was incarnated in the flesh, where He was Divine and human. We however, on earth, are mortal flesh with an immortal spirit. Thus being physical and subject to



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physical death, we are **gods** in only the very limited sense of being created in God’s image and likeness, and, thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ’s sacrifice, we have the ultimate potential of becoming the same kind of luminous being God is, the same level of divine spirit existence that He has. But this transformation



involves a certain process.

The process of our transformation into **gods** starts here on earth in the Sacrament of Baptism where we share in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then in the Sacrament of Chrismation or Confirmation, where our spirit receives the anointing of the Holy Spirit of God. Saint Paul in Romans 8: 16 says, *“The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”*

The process continues in the Eucharist, where the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ become one with ours, and through the reading of the Word of God, as Saint Peter says in II Peter 1: 4, *“That through these (the promises of the Lord Jesus Christ) you may be partakers of the Divine Nature.”* After receiving the Eucharist, my mind set should be that the Lord Jesus Christ and I are living inside my earthly suit, crying and laughing together.

Again, this does not mean that we become divine by nature and we do not participate in God’s essence or nature, for if we do the distinction between God and man would be abolished. Being created in the image of God means that like God we have a mind and spirit and can be creative or even seek the impossible; it means that we are created to be immortal, an image of God’s eternity. We know the mind of God in a limited way, and if we have defects, it shows that we are only the image. Because we are His children, we should continually pursue the desire to know Him better. The more we hunger and thirst for God, the more of Himself He reveals to us; and the more He reveals, the more we will love Him.

The process of transformation into perfected beings as **gods** is consummated at the end of this life, in the

Resurrection at the Lord Jesus Christ’s return, where we will be changed into divine spiritual beings like God. Saint John in I John 3: 2 writes, *“Beloved, now we are the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”* The same meaning is repeated in Romans 5: 2; 1 Peter 5: 10; 1 Thessalonians 2: 12; II Thessalonians 2: 14; and in Colossians 1: 27. Holy Scriptures tell us that we will then receive dominion over all things, just as the Lord Jesus Christ has (Romans 8: 17; Hebrews 2: 5-9; and Revelation 21: 7). This true dominion over all things makes us like God.

Therefore believers on earth do have a small measure of the Divine through the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, but in the Kingdom of Heaven after the deification we will have the Holy Spirit of God in full. Saint Paul in this regard says, *“Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known (that is by God).”* (1 Corinthians 13: 12) This is when we are deified or transformed into the kind of being that God is, though forever subject to the authority of God; God being the Father, and man being the child of God. By faith, on earth, we believe we are **gods**; in glory, in the Kingdom of Heaven, we shall know who we are.

Finally, Father Anthony Coniaris in his book ‘Introduction to the Orthodox Church’ describes the process of deification, also called in Greek ‘theosis’, as follows: “In Orthodox theology, salvation is not static but dynamic; it is not a completed state, a state of having arrived, a state of having made it, but a constant moving toward theosis, toward becoming like Christ, toward receiving the fullness of Christ’s life. And it can never be achieved fully in this life.” ☩