

Daily Meditation 12/31/2022

New Year's Eve, 2023, Cosmic Christ & Transfiguration of the World

Good morning.

Today we're meditating with Nicolas Berdyaev, the Russian Orthodox theologian, on how the Eastern Church puts forward the Cosmic Christ so fully that it does not focus on finding redemption as the salvation of the individual. This psychological approach became very strong with St. Augustine and has impacted the Western version of Christianity overly much.

But as he points out, what the Eastern Church considers salvation and redemption to be as Theosis, divinizing all creatures, the transfiguration of the world, the idea of the cosmos as sacred. This being the kingdom of God, transfiguring the world, the universal resurrection, a new heaven and a new Earth.

I'm going to share with you from the artist Ullrich Javier Lemus, who created the Transfiguration sculpture for our Stations of the Cosmic Christ book, which I did with Bishop Mark Andrus.

His Transfiguration has lots of mirrors in it, and he says the mirror is most important part of this icon. The mirrors speak to the reality that each of us is part of everything else in the universe. And he includes minerals and snakes and animals and rocks. He says:

Minerals and rocks are alive. And I've inserted them into the clay, for they are part and of the universe

-- in fact, they are the oldest part of the universe --

...and connect our daily lives to the universe's, microcosmic and macrocosmic workings. My understanding of the Transfiguration is that Jesus' Inner light shone; his Divinity was on display. As is ours, and that of the rocks and other beings if we see correctly.

The shapes in this icon depict movement and transfiguration. Things get shaped and undergo shapeshifting. The eye here is made of minerals, it is a gem. So, too the divine eye emerges in a snake shape. The snake is often demonized, as in the Garden of Eden story, but here it is redeemed. The serpent is standing up; it holds an eye of God and an eye of others; there's a harmony returning. The flesh stands for all things not just human. At the level of flesh, all beings are equal.

The eye at the bottom represents a deer eye and the eye at the top depicts a human eye. They are equal.... Meister Eckhart says 'the eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me. And the sixth chakra is the 'third eye' chakra.

The eye often depicts wisdom in Egyptian philosophy. He says:

I'm experimenting here with mixed media -- not just clay -- as I mix clay and minerals, the mineral world, the animal world (snakes and deer), the human world, and the Divine world. This to me is transfiguration, recovering the Divine, which is shining and radiant in all things.

I think this testimony from an artist who created an icon of the Transfiguration is very well done. It's good theology. And it's good to hear from artists, not only their artwork as such, but their willingness to offer us the theology behind it.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow. And a blessed new year to all of us.