

Do you want to see God? (Fr. Andreas Agathokleous)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



Abba Olympios recounts: ‘One time, a pagan priest came down to Skete and slept in my cell. When he saw the way the monks lived he asked me:

- “The way you live, do you never see anything of your God?”
- “No”, I answered. He went on.
- “Well, with us, when we hold a service for our god, he doesn’t hide anything from us, but reveals all his secrets. You make so much effort, with vigils, stillness and asceticism and yet you say that you don’t see anything. If you don’t see anything, it must be because you have bad thoughts in your heart which separate you from your God and prevent Him from revealing Himself to you”.

I went later and told the elders what the pagan priest had said. They were amazed and said: “That’s right. Because impure thoughts do, indeed, separate us from God”.



This incident shows us why it is that, despite His desire to do so, our own God can't reveal Himself to us, nor can He reveal the mysteries of life, nor the reason why so many unpleasant things happen to us.

It appears that our bad reactions, the tortured questioning, the complaints, the doubts will never stop tormenting us as long as our heart's filled with bad thoughts. These prevent the 'God of our heart' from revealing Himself as love and from showing us that what's happening around us is a concession to us from Him in order to achieve our cure and redemption.

Through purity of heart, prayer, fasting, quietude, asceticism, as well as the observance of Christ's commandments, we not only learn the 'hows' and 'whys' of life, but also Who our God is, how He lives and how He's revealed. We meet Him 'face to face', converse with Him, talk to Him as our own familiar Friend, as did- and do- all the saints, as friends of Christ.

At the Divine Liturgy, where we serve Him as the Church, and also in private prayer, we have the opportunity to meet Him and see Him 'in another form', so long as we don't allow random thoughts to come between us. Because then the Liturgy and prayer will proceed without the awareness of His presence*.

The struggle against thoughts is our consent to His invitation to meet Him in the locus of the heart, where He will reveal His mysteries to us, where we shall see and

hear Him as the living God. Those who've achieved this assure us that, although it requires effort, it is beautiful, sweet and restorative.

Ours isn't the God of philosophers or the imagination. Nor is He a tyrant, oppressing poor people with threats and punishments. He's 'the God of our fathers', who saw Him, heard Him, touched Him, knew Him and who show us the way in which we, too, can meet Him and enjoy the untold delight of beholding His human and divine face 'in the present age and in the next'.

***Theology is 'talking about or describing God', what we know of Him. It's not explicitly present in the Old Testament or the Gospels (though a case could be made for some passages, in John in particular). There is, in Greek, however, another word 'theognosia', which looks as though it ought to mean 'knowledge of God'. The Fathers, the theologians, tell us, however, that God can't really be known, so perhaps 'awareness of God', of His presence, is a better rendition. This, of course, is very much present in both the Old and New Testaments and is open to all of us.**