

Reflections on Sunday's Readings: June 16, 2019



Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

Proverbs 8: 22-31

Romans 5: 1-5

John 16: 12-15

Snuggling with the Trinity

Introduction

One of my heroes in our Franciscan tradition is **John Duns Scotus**, a friar-theologian who lived at the end of the 1200's and the beginnings of the 1300's. Like **St. Bonaventure**, who lived just before him, John Duns Scotus was a mystic as well as an educator at the various universities developing at this time.

A key insight for Duns Scotus was what is called the **"univocity of being,"** that we can speak of the whole tapestry of being – from rocks, plants, animals, to humans, and to God – with "one voice," as all sharing in the same "being," the same stuff. This is how we can say that we all share in God's DNA. As St. Bonaventure would say, if you look with awareness at all of creation, all that is, you can see God's "fingerprints" and "footprints" throughout creation.

Amazingly, Scotus helps us **"bridge"** the gap between what we think about God when we see God as beyond us and what we think about creation as here with us. There are not "two tiers" of God in heaven and we on earth. Scotus helps us see that we are all connected, and we all share the same "being" with one another.

Transcendental Qualities

An insight from classical theology was that the "transcendental qualities" of God – what is key to God's being, gathered from creation and revelation – are the qualities of **goodness, truth, and beauty**. And now with Scotus' connection of all life sharing in God's being, we see more

clearly that we too share in these qualities. At our core, we are good, beautiful, and true! We might want to let this sink into us, especially if we struggle at times with our own self-worth.

For Scotus all of creation is “lovable,” even before it is fully known, because we share in these divine qualities. This is our inherent dignity, and it is the inherent dignity of everything that exists. In our deepest places we are good, beautiful, and we carry truth. We are trustworthy. These are dynamic qualities alive in us. This is every creature’s starting point, and why we hold out hope for everyone.

Our Deepest Vocation

Our deepest calling, our deepest vocation – no matter what commitments we make or what careers we follow – is to manifest this goodness, beauty, and truth given to us from the Holy Trinity. We are called and invited to let these qualities of God flow through us, shine through us, in everything we do. This is the life and the world that we live in – one founded in truth, goodness, and beauty.

Our spiritual lives are really about our waking up and staying awake to these truths about God and ourselves.

Beautiful Image

To help this become more concrete, I came upon a beautiful image in a spiritual writer’s book this week. The writer explained that no matter how beautiful and comfortable you make your child’s bassinet or how beautiful and inviting you make your child’s bedroom, the child always wants to be in bed with you. Children want often to be in the middle of you. Why is this?

The writer offers that this is so because “this place between you” is where life is! This is where the energy is! This is where “relationship” is happening, and they want to be a part of this.

The same is true for us with God.

Holy Trinity

I have been thinking all week about how am I going to talk to you about the Trinity. It is indeed a mystery that is hard to take in just with our heads. We need to get beyond our foreheads here. I believe the way into this Mystery of who God is ... is through our hearts, our bodies, our minds, and our spirits. It is what some spiritual writers call “kinesthetic knowing.” This is knowing with all that we are.

Our heritage, the way God has revealed God’s own self to us is that there is a “dynamic set of relationships” going on in our God. There are three persons: **the Creator or Father, the Incarnate Word or Son**, and the **Holy and Indwelling Spirit**. We look to the Creator/Father (and we remember that there is no gender in God as such but because we flow from God as men and women we trust that there is an abundance of the masculine and feminine energies in God) so we might say **Mother** also ... who reflects the **infinite** part of God. God is beyond all of creation and yet permeates all of creation. The Word/Son is God “with skin on.” Jesus comes

to share our humanity, to “pitch his tent” with us, and to know us from the inside out. Jesus reflects the **immanence** of God sharing life with us. And Jesus, wanting to stay close to us and be with each of us all our life, wherever we are, sends his Spirit to dwell inside of us. The Holy Spirit reflects the **intimacy** of God with each of us and with all of creation. These gifts flow throughout the persons of the Trinity, but these insights hopefully help us see the “threeness in one” of the dynamic life of our God.

Now picking up on the beautiful image of the child wanting to “be in the center” of the relationship and energy of the parents, we are invited to snuggle into the very heart of our God. We are invited to be in the center, in the middle, of the three persons of the Trinity. And we are beginning to understand more fully that we will need to grow in some “contemplative practices” to help this happen. We will need to build on our liturgies and our devotions and grow into some practices that allow us to “be” with God and God to “be” with us.

A good insight here is that often with those we love and have grown close to ... we just want to be with them. **Presence** is the gift shared, and so it is with our God too.

Our Experiences Help Also

We know God most fully through our experiences of the Trinity and their resonance in our lives. Our human experiences also reflect the life of the Trinity often without our realizing it. For example, we experience our uniqueness and our true identity as a person especially in our communion with others. As we grow in friendship, marriage, partnership, and community, we come to know our deepest selves. We are experiencing the mystery of identity in union, our individuality in and through our communion with another or others. We are participating in the life of the Trinity in these moments, and we “know” in a profound way what is going on in the heart of the life of our God.

Contemplative Practices

Contemplative practices like “centering prayer” or “Lectio Divina” or quiet meditation help us climb into the middle of the relationships going on in the Trinity, and so I would like to use these final minutes to invite you into a “centering prayer” practice. We need to “experience” **this communion of our being with God’s being** more than talk about it.

I invite you to settle into your sitting positions. I would encourage you to place your feet firmly on the floor, to make sure your back is up against the pew; and if you feel comfortable to close your eyes.

Begin to take in some deep breaths now. Breathe more deeply than you normally do. Take in several of these deep breaths now as we grow quieter with one another.

One spiritual writer offers that as we breathe, we are really pronouncing on our lips the Old Testament name of God “Yahweh.” Be aware how close God is to you as you breathe.

Now become aware of your heartbeat. Become aware of your heartbeat or imagine your heart beating and sending your life-blood throughout all of your body, to nourish you. Be aware that your life is a gift, that God is holding you now with love.

Now take a moment and repeat quietly inside this line from the psalms: “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46: 10). Repeat this line quietly inside for several times. Let it draw you into deeper quiet and stillness.

Now we’re going to shorten that just a bit: “Be still and know that I am.” And repeat this quietly inside for several times.

Now a little bit shorter: “Be still and know.” And repeat this quietly inside for several times.

Now: “Be still.” And repeat this quietly inside for several times.

Finally: “Be.” “Be.” Just repeat this quietly inside several times.

This practice of “centering prayer” allows our “being” to rest with “God’s being.” Let’s just rest here for a few moments with God.

Conclusion

Thanks very much for entering into this quiet together.

I do believe that we come to know the Trinity more fully through our lived experiences and through taking time to “be” with our God more than with our head trying to understand the concept of the Trinity. These “experiences,” and a more experiential way of knowing, lead us more deeply into the flow of God’s life, deeper into the “middle” and “center” of these wondrous relationships of the Trinity at the heart of our God. Peace!

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