

St. Martha's Adult Formation
March 25, April 8 & 15, 2008
7:30 –9:00 PM

HOLY RELATIONSHIPS

RECEIVING AND BEING FORGIVENESS

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any they are retained.” (*Jn 20: 21-23*)

Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being. Made in the image of God that is a Trinity - a communion of love - human beings are created with the capacity and responsibility to live in “love and communion”. Our God is Holy and we must be holy as well. Our lives are lived in relationship with others and our vocation calls us to live with each other in good and holy relationships. Our daily experience tells us that it is no easy task. The hard truth is that all of us love poorly. We need to forgive and be forgiven every day, every hour - unceasingly.

Forgiveness – the forgiveness of God – is at the heart of Christian holiness and is the mission of the Three in One Love revealed in the mystery of Christ crucified into Resurrection.

In this series we will look at what is it that defines, inspires and sabotages our ability to live holy relationships. Recognizing that “grace builds on nature”, we will draw on the deeply Trinitarian wisdom found in Ignatian Spirituality and on the clarity about human relationship patterns explicated in Family Systems Theory (Bowen Theory). And we will examine closely the natural and graced movements that are part of the process of receiving and being forgiveness.

MARCH 25TH – *THE TRINITY*

APRIL 8TH - *TRIANGLES*

APRIL 15TH - *FORGIVENESS: HOLY AND RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS*

MARCH 25,2008 – *THE TRINITY*

“May the Holy Spirit, who is Love, make your heart a little hearth that rejoices the Three Divine Persons through the ardor of its flames.”
(Letter 278, Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity)

“**O Consuming Fire**, Spirit of Love, Come down upon me, as it were, an incarnation of the Word, that I might be to Him another humanity in which He renews all His Mystery.”

Teach us how to abide in Love and Faith, with the Holy Trinity in innermost depths of our heart. Teach us how to radiate God’s Love to all with whom we come in contact with in our everyday life, just as you did, so that we may become a praise of God’s glory.

(from a Novena in Honor of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity)

THE JOINT MISSION OF THE SON AND THE SPIRIT

1. When the Father sends his Word, he always sends his Breath. In their joint mission, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct but inseparable.
2. Jesus is Christ, “anointed,” because the Spirit is his anointing. It is this anointing from which everything from the Incarnation on derives its fullness. It is the mission of the Spirit to unite the children adopted by the Father to Christ and to make them live in him. St. Gregory of Nyssa says it this way.
The notion of anointing suggests...that there is no distance between the Son and the Spirit. Indeed, just as between the surface of the body and the anointing with oil neither reason nor sensation recognizes any intermediary, so the contact of the Son with the Spirit is immediate...
(CCC No. 690)
3. To be in touch with Christ, the Holy Spirit must first have touched us. “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Cor 12:3).
4. “The Spirit who ‘has spoken through the prophets’ makes us hear the Father’s Word, but we do not hear the Spirit himself. We know the Holy Spirit only in the movements by which he reveals the Word to us and disposes us to welcome him in faith.” (CCC, No. 687) It seem obvious then, why any disciple of the Lord would need to be intimately familiar the Word of God in Scripture and to be contemplative enough to be able to discern the movements of the Spirit in their lives and in the Body of Christ.

**Jesus Christ, by coming into this world,
has changed the *sunsets of time* into the *sunrises of eternity*.**

Clement of Alexandria, 3rd century

To live the Christ-life begins with encounter. In either times of good fortune or bad, if we want to live with and in the communion of love that is the Trinity our first focus must be on entering God's presence (encounter), and in that encounter deepening our double knowledge of who God is and who we are. And so our first desire is that we want:

to encounter God in each person of the Trinity, to enter into Their Joy and Their Oneness (fellowship).

Living this life of the Trinity revealed to us by Jesus Christ means we desire also:

*to participate in community with other broken, desperate,
grateful saints who also are journeying toward God
and unwilling to settle for lesser joy.*

And to:

*experience transformation, cooperating with the Spirit
in forming Christ in us.*

According to the apostle John (1 Jn 1:1-3), fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the central point of the Christian message. And the purpose of John's writing is the attainment of fellowship (oneness with Christ) and Christian joy. "We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete." (1Jn 1:4). It changes earth's sunsets in to heaven's sunrises and moves us along toward heaven's ecstasy.

(adapted from *The Pressure's Off*, Larry Crabb. Waterbrook Press, 2002)

REFORM YOUR LIVES: (*tesuvah* - to turn)

tesuvah mi yirah – out of fear

tesuvah mie aharah – out of love

ba'al teshuvah (Ps 51:5) – repentance and forgiveness as divine gifts
predicated on doing *teshuvah* – i.e. being accountable, taking
responsibility

-Rabbi Chaim Nussbaum,
The Essence of Tesuvah - A Path to Repentance. Jason Aronson, Inc. 1993.

THE THREE MOVEMENTS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE*

1ST MOVEMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE: (relationship to God)

from: "sin" of *illusion & idolatry* (1st commandment)

Reflection: What *idols* are in the center of your life?

What are your *illusions or false images* of God?

to: "sacrament" of **prayer**.

Reflection: Who were you told God is?

What is your experience of who God is?

A discovery of God in prayer will, if it is true, be, with great freedom and great grace, at one and the same time a discovery of compassion for the self, mercy for the other and justice for the created order.

- M. Matthews, "The director's dilemma" in *The Tablet*, September 1989

2ND MOVEMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE (relationship to self)

from: "sin" of *loneliness* (marked by alienation)

Reflection: What are your negative self images?

How have others defined you?

to: "sacrament" of **solitude** (marked by integrity)

Reflection: Who do you say that you are? ("personal vocation")

"Assent to God starts in sincere assent to our selves, just a sinful flight from God starts in flight from our selves." - Johannes Metz, *Poverty of Spirit*

3RD MOVEMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE (relationship to others)

from: "sin" of *hostility* (rivalry, contempt, "scarcity", commoditization)

to: "sacrament" of **hospitality**

"Real receptivity asks for confrontation because space can only be a welcoming space when there are clear boundaries, and boundaries are the limits between which we define our own position." - Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out*

(* Adapted from Henri Nouwen, *Reaching out*. Doubleday, 1975.)

THE TRINITY

1. On the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, 2006 during the homily, this is the sentence that captured my full attention. “According to theologians of the Paschal Mystery, it is the unique prerogative of Jesus Christ to reveal the Trinity”.
2. In talking of the Trinity in the “grammar of the Trinity”, Jesus the Incarnate Word is Love’s Speaking and the Spirit is Love’s Breathing. Love’s speaking and breathing is enfleshed through the Incarnation and in the cross of Christ. It is through the cross that we are reassured that in our own incarnation with negative as well as positive experiences, in our entering into all of our experiences, in not denying or avoiding the negative experiences is the way that we participate in the life and glory of God, in the communion of love that is the Trinity. “The central message of the cross of Christ: light shines amidst the darkness, life emerges from death; love prevails over all evil.” (*Altogether Gift*, p. 34.)
3. Jesus, immersed in the waters of the Jordan and the fullness of human life, is plunged into the heart’s wilderness. He is brought through by the Breath of Love to be Love itself: Love’s gift, Love’s Word. “To assure that his own self-giving would continue, that the gift would be given again and yet again, he took the simple earthly realities of bread and wine of meal, in and through them, gave himself again: Take and eat. Take and drink (*Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:14-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26*).
4. Love is in action (*Sp Ex – Contempaltio*) – this is what Love is and does. Love pours itself out. And Love “pours itself into the human heart, that land of deep and lasting desire, the land of longing, of an absence aching for light, for life, for love. The heart is the region of wound and wisdom, the Spirit’s dwelling within, the place from which Love speaks Love’s name, “Father,” in and through the Spirit, Love’s Breath.” (*Altogether Gift*, p. 35.)
5. Christ’s Resurrection is an object of faith in that it is a transcendent intervention of God himself in creation and history. In it the three divine persons act together as one, and manifest their own proper characteristics. The Father’s power “raised up” Christ his Son and by doing so perfectly introduced his Son’s humanity, including his body, into the Trinity. Jesus is conclusively revealed as “Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his Resurrection from the dead.” (*CCC no. 648*)

THE THREE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY

1. The Spirit is the last of the three persons of the Holy Trinity to be revealed. St. Gregory of Nazianzus, the Theologian, explains this progressive revelation of the mystery of the Trinity this way.
The Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, but the Son more obscurely. The New Testament revealed the Son and gave us a glimpse of the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit dwells among us and grants us a clearer vision of himself. It was not prudent, when the divinity of the Father had not yet been confessed, to proclaim the Son openly and, when the divinity of the Son was not yet admitted, to add the Holy Spirit as an extra burden, to speak somewhat daringly ...By advancing and progressing "from glory to glory," the light of the Trinity will shine in ever more brilliant rays. (CCC, No. 684).
2. Christian faith is expressed in the prepositions – we pray *to* the Father, *through* the Son and *in* the Spirit.
3. The Spirit - by whom Jesus was led into the desert after his baptism in the Jordan, named “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” at Pentecost – is the Holy Spirit of God in Christ, is *Love’s Breath*. In, with and through this life-giving, Love-breathing Spirit of Jesus we are no longer bound by the law of sin (*Rom 7*); and we live in freedom as the children of God (*Rom 8*).
4. “By the Spirit who is Gift/ing, dwelling within our hearts, we behold the mystery of the Trinity in the Incarnate Word, Given, whose life, words, mission, passion, dying, and rising are the very love of the Giver of all life and love.” (Downey, *Altogether Gift*, p.55)

THE GRAMMAR OF THE TRINITY

1. Augustine names the Holy Spirit – *Love* in naming the Trinity as the Lover, the Beloved and the Love between them. The *grammar* of the Trinity names the Spirit - *Gift/ing* in a grammar of gift that speaks of God as Giver, Given, Gift/ing.
2. The Father is originating Lover; the Son is the self-expression of Love; and the Spirit is the inexhaustible self-giving of Love.
3. In the 20th century, Catherine Mowry LaCugna’s work on this *grammar* of the Trinity introduced a different way of speaking of the grand economy of salvation.
4. The *oikonomia*, the “economy” of salvation was the central concern of early Christian theology. In the Greek, the word had to do with how the household was managed or controlled. In Christian theology, the word was used to talk about how the Trinity was accomplishing our salvation in history – the Father sending the Son, and then the Father and the ascended Son sending the Holy Spirit, proclaimed and handed on in the scriptures and in the living traditions of the Church.
5. Both *oikonomia* and *grammar* are ways of talking about the profound mystery of the one God in Three Persons, of the three in one Love. The grammar as *theologia* (more speculative considerations about the mystery of God) remains grounded in the *oikonomia*, in the creating saving, sanctifying action of the Father, Son and Spirit in the economy of salvation.
6. In the grammar of the Trinity the distinctiveness is sought within the Godhead. The focus is not, as in the economy, on the actions but on the relation between the three in one divine nature. It is found in the distinctive way of self-giving of Father, Son and Spirit - Giver, Given and Gift/ing. Giving is relational. The grammar of the Trinity names God and all reality as personal, as *being toward* another, and *for* the other, in relation.

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*The proof that you are sons is the fact that God has sent forth
into our hearts the Spirit of his Son
which cries out “Abba!” (“Father!”)*

- Galatians 4:6

One of the chapters in the book *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice* (edited by Timothy George and published by Baker Academic Press, 2006) is Gerald Bray’s reflection on “The Christian Experience of God in Trinity”. Bray begins his essay with this question. “Why did a new religion arise out of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth?” Why did the community of faith formed by the followers of Jesus distinct from its Jewish parent? Why not a sectarian fringe like the Essenes or an aberrant group like the Samaritans?

In the book *Jewish Literacy*, Rabbi Joseph Telushkin argues that although there is not a Jewish consensus on how Jews are to regard Jesus, many contemporary Jewish scholars “have tended to view him as one of several first and second century Jews who claimed to be the Messiah, and who attempted to rid Judea of its Roman oppressors. However, almost no Jewish scholars believe that Jesus intended to start a new religion”(p.128). In fact, he argues that the real founder of Christianity was another first-century Jew, Paul. And argues that it was Paul’s rejection of the need for Torah observance and substitution of faith in Jesus that started this new religion.

Bray has a very different answer and he also appeals to Paul. Paul wrote Galatians during the heat of a controversy over the relationship of Jewish law to the Christian gospel. Paul is not the founder of this new religion, but in *Gal* 4:6 expresses his deepest conviction about the nature of the one God as revealed by Jesus. The undifferentiated One God of the Old Testament has been revealed as the Three in One – Father, Son and Spirit.

The Disagreement with Judaism

1. Though there is a basic agreement between Jewish and Christian theology, it is not without exception. A radically different perception of the One God meant that the early Jewish and Christian communities could no longer recognize each other as belonging to the same faith community.
2. *Religion* asks these questions: “Who is God?; “Who is God for us?; and, “Who are we as God’s people?”. It makes sense then if members of community of faith have very different ideas about who God is, that a new *religion* will emerge.
3. “As Paul says in *Gal* 4:6, Christians claim that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Spirit, Son, Father – the work of these three characterize the Christian experience of God in a way that Jews regard as incompatible with their belief in the undifferentiated One. Christians reject this, claiming instead that the

three *are* one, and in a way that is perfectly consistent with Old Testament revelation!” (p.42)

4. This new Christian understanding (i.e. *hermeneutic*) makes no sense in Jewish terms. Muslims also reject this understanding of the One God as the differentiated Three in One.

From Outside to Inside

1. Judaism by the criteria of the Mosaic law is defined primarily by external criteria.
2. To say that Old Testament was a religion in which externals are primary is not to deny Old Testament spirituality. Nor to say that Christianity is primarily an internal experience of God does not mean that there are no meaningful outward expressions (e.g. sacraments).

JUDAISM

rite of circumcision
physical descendants of Abraham
(born of a Jewish mother)
law on tablets
a distinct nation
a holy land, a temple, an ark
ordinary Jews could not enter
the Holy of Holies

CHRISTIANITY

rite of Baptism
spiritual descendants of Abraham
("begotten from above" Cf. Jn 3.3)
law in the heart
no distinct nation
no holy land, no temple, no ark
the holiest of holies - the inner life of
the Trinity - is open to all

Prayer in the Morning

The Cry of the Deer. Meditations on the Hymn of St. Patrick

(David Adam, Morehouse Publishing 1987)

I bind unto myself the name,
The strong name of the Trinity;
By invocation of the same.
The Three in One, and One in Three,
Of whom all nature hath creation;
Eternal Father, Spirit, Word:
Praise to the Lord of my salvation,
Salvation is of Christ the Lord.

LIVING IN THE BREATH OF GOD

Each day, I set myself to live one of the gifts (*Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness and Goodness, Trust, Gentle Self-control*) that the Holy Spirit gave me at Baptism; and to call to mind one of the seven gifts (*Wisdom, Understanding, Knowledge, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, Fear of the Lord*) of the Holy Spirit prayed for at my Confirmation.

On rising

I begin each day praising my Creator and Lord.
I recite the Creed; I make my Morning Offering.
I read the day's gospel and pray a while.

Throughout the day

The Breath of God breathes through me in all of my daily interactions.
My vocation encompasses all that I am and all that I do.
My call to holiness is lived in *knowing that God has made me holy*,
I need only to let the Holy Spirit of God in Christ breath in me.

My Baptismal call to evangelization is enacted
when I let the Holy Spirit act in and through me.

During the week

I attend Mass and receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

I celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation often.

I keep a Christian diet, not abusing myself.

I live simply so others can simply live. I give help to the poor.

Prayer at Night

TRINITARIAN EXAMEN

1. Think of a gift/good that happened

PRAISE GOD *THE FATHER*, AND GIVE THANKS

2. Call to mind a failing/sin

ASK JESUS, GOD *THE SON*, FOR FORGIVENESS

3. Prepare for tomorrow

INVOKe GOD, *THE HOLY SPIRIT*, FOR GUIDANCE

Breathe in me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may be holy.

Act in me, Holy Spirit, that my work may also be holy.

Fill my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy.

Guard me, Holy Spirit, that I may ever remain holy.

Preserve me, Holy Spirit, that my body may remain your dwelling.

In my last hour call me, Holy Spirit, to enjoy the holiness of heaven.

CANTICLE OF SIMEON

Protect us, Lord, as we stay awake;
watch over us as we sleep,
that awake, we may keep watch with Christ,
and asleep, rest in His peace. AMEN.

Grant me, Lord, a restful night and a peaceful death.

CLOSING PRAYER:

For the Infinite Glory of God

Vincent Pallotti was gifted with a profound experience of God as Infinite Love and Mercy. It is this experience that underlies all expressions of Pallottine prayer life.

God in all, God for ever
Seek God,
Seek God in all things,
Seek God in all
and you will find God in all.
Seek God always,
Seek God in every moment,
Seek God always
And you will always find God.

God is Love, and whoever lives in love,
Lives in God, and God lives in them
Sing to God, who loves us from all eternity,
All things speak to us of You,
And of your Goodness.

Seek God,
Seek God in all things,
Seek God in all
And you will find God in all.

Seek God always,
Seek God in every moment,
Seek God always and
You will always find God.
God is Love!