

LECTIO DIVINA: THE SOLEMNITY OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

NRSV Gospel: John 3:16-18

Jesus said to Nicodemus,

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. "Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

LECTIO

As we pray Lectio we note the teaching of Basil Pennington (1998); "It is the Holy Spirit who prays in us. We use Lectio to open the space for the Spirit to act in us freely and powerfully, to be one with us in our prayer" (p.xii). We seek to grow more in heart and mind with God and let ourselves be guided on the path of eternal life. As Jesus said to Nicodemus "The wind blows where it chooses ..." (John 3:8). So at the beginning of our Lectio let's pray that the wind (Spirit) chooses us!

A few things resonate with me in this Gospel.

- Nicodemus: Jesus held a long conversation with Nicodemus who was a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin. He was drawn to Jesus but fearful of the religious establishment in which he resided, so he came to Jesus in secret seeking understanding. He eventually overcame fears and defended Jesus before the Sanhedrin (John 7:50-51) and helped Joseph of Arimathea take care of Jesus' body after his death (Comfort & Elwell, 2004). Are we sometimes like Nicodemus and hide our belief in Jesus for fear of ridicule? Do we fear our own religious establishment? Do we too often fail to understand what Jesus is saying to us? We are inevitably limited by the horizons of our culture, upbringing, education, prejudices and capacity. So we seek God in all the ways we can through the sacraments, Lectio Divina, prayer, spiritual reading and trust that Spirit will guide us. We also accept that some things are beyond our understanding like the mystery of the Trinity.
- God "gave his only son". Here we have the first and second persons of the Trinity. Jesus says to Nicodemus "no one can enter the kingdom of heaven without being born of water and the spirit" (John 3:5). Intrinsic to our faith is the mystery of the Holy Trinity. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1994) states this about the Trinity;

"The Trinity is a mystery of faith ... one of the mysteries hidden by God, which can never be known unless they are revealed by God" (p.63).

“The Trinity is one God in three persons” and each of the persons “is God whole and entire. They are ... distinct from one another” (p.67), “Inseparable in what they are, the divine persons are inseparable in what they do” (p.70).

Another mystery in our faith is the mystery that God allows evil in the world. Julian of Norwich says that it is “... a mystery hidden in God, a mystery which he will make openly known to us in heaven; in which knowledge we shall truly see the reason why he allowed sin to exist” (Julian of Norwich, in Larrimore Ed. 2001. P.28) clearly, we just have to wait for some answers and understanding.

We know that we are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26) and that Jesus refers to three parts of our personhood “heart, soul and mind” (Matthew 22:37) and that He said “Abide in me as I abide in you” (John 15:4). This suggests to me that the different dimensions of the self, may echo the Trinity in an analogous way. Thus we have the God given capacity and freedom of will to grow in wisdom, truth, love, service and sacrifice, inspiration, knowledge and guidance as we mature spiritually. These are the gifts of the Holy Spirit. At the end of the day we accept the mysteries of our faith.

What has as all this theologising got to do with our Christian way of life? Maybe not a lot. After all our prayers and spiritual endeavours the important question is “What is the fruit of our spiritual practice” (Pennington, 1998 p.80). Are we following Jesus commandment to love and care for our neighbours and self? If we truly believe, this is what a Christian does and therefor hopes to have “have eternal life”.

ORATIO

Lord open my heart to your word
Guide me along the right path
Make me walk in your truth
For you are our Lord and God

EVANGELIZATIO

Jesus’ mission was “to save the world”. How are we supporting this mission?

REFERENCES

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