

Dear Friends,

John 1: 29-34

The doctrine of the Trinity affirms that there is one God who is revealed in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three persons relate to each other. There is a relationship of love within the heart of God. I'm going to look at elements of this relationship as we find them in the story of the baptism of Jesus.

The first element, which we will look at in the next couple of letters, is seen in the movement of the Spirit towards Jesus. When Jesus was baptised, the Spirit descended upon him like a dove. I am going to take a slow motion look at this movement. I think it has five separate phases. The Spirit (1) comes from God; (2) longs for Jesus; (3) fixes the gaze upon Jesus; (4) moves towards Jesus; (5) remains on Jesus. You are invited to join with the Spirit in these attitudes and actions.

Phase one is **to come from God**. When Jesus is baptised, the heavens open and the Holy Spirit comes down. You can imagine God from heaven breathing out the Spirit upon Jesus, as Jesus will later breathe out the Holy Spirit upon his friends.

Jesus knew that, like the Spirit, he came from God. The writer of John's gospel tells us that Jesus washed the feet of his friends "knowing ... that he had come from God and was going to God". Jesus also knew that he was given by God. He said, "God so loved the world that he gave his only son". And what Jesus knew for himself, he wanted everyone else to know. After his resurrection he said to his friends, "As the Father has sent me so I send you". "As I have come from God and am sent by God, so you have come from God and are sent by God".

You come from God. You are part of this outpouring of God's life which is the creation. One of the mystics described the creation as God's life boiling over. It's as though God's life is filling a bubbling pot. This life is so full of energy that the pot cannot contain it. The life boils over and becomes the creation. You are a little bit of this boiling over of God's life. You bear the image and likeness of God. You carry the presence and life of God.

You are also sent by Jesus. Together you are called to be the body of Christ, doing what he does, saying what he says, being what he is. As Teresa of Avilla, the 16th century mystic put it, "Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body on earth but yours".

At the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came down from God. You may unite yourself with the Spirit in knowing that you come from God.

Phase two is **to long for Jesus**. We see the Spirit's thirst for Jesus in the book of Revelation at the end of the Bible. It closes with expressions of yearning for Jesus. Almost the last words are "Come Lord Jesus". A little before that it says, "The Spirit and the bride say "come"". By joining with the prayer, the Spirit shows a hunger for Jesus. You are invited to join with the Spirit in this longing. You are called to share with those who wrote the Psalms in the desire for God. One of them wrote, "O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water." The words of another of the Psalms have been turned into one of our songs "As the deer pants for the water so my soul longs after you". The Spirit longs for Jesus and you are invited to join with the Spirit in this longing.

God bless you,

Tony