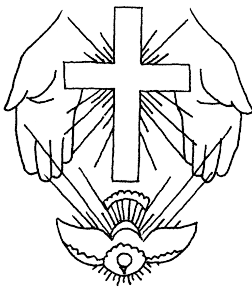




Diocese of Motherwell
Mission & Evangelisation



CONTEMPLATIVE THEOLOGY

PART TWO *FIRST REFLECTIONS*

N.B. These reflections may take one, two, three sessions to complete. It is important that the group takes as much time as it requires. When revisiting, it is essential to again pray Lectio Divina.



LECTIO DIVINA

MEDITATION (2/1)

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE HOLY TRINITY: JOHN 14.8-17, 25-26

⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me^l for anything, I will do it. ¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

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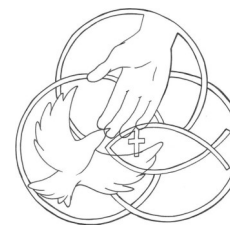
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION (2/1)

The Holy Trinity is a communion of persons, a dynamic relationship marked by participation of each of the Persons in the other, equality, mutual love and solidarity. **“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit.”** I Corinthians 13.13

i. How does our understanding of God as Trinity differ from that of Judaism or Islam?

ii. When we talk of the “mystery” of the Trinity, what do we mean by “mystery?”

iii. What are some of the moments in my life when I felt God’s presence powerfully and how did I experience this presence?



A Threefold God totally lets go of any boundaries for the sake of the Other, and then receives them back from Another. It is a nonstop waterwheel of Love. Each accepts that He is fully accepted by the Other, and then passes on that total acceptance. Thus “God is Love.” It’s the same spiritual journey for all of us, and it takes most of our life to accept that we are accepted - and to accept everyone else.

Most can’t do this easily because internally there is so much self-accusation (self-flagellation in many cases). Most are so convinced that they are not the body of Christ, that they are unworthy, that we are not in radical union with God.

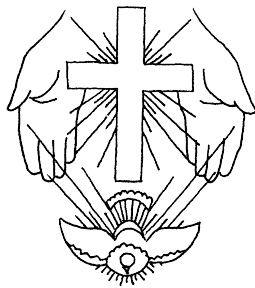
The good news is that the question of union has already been resolved once and for all. We cannot create our union with God from our side. It is objectively already given to us by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us (**Romans 8:9** - and all over the place!).

Once we know we are that grounded, founded, and home free, we can also stop defending ourselves and move beyond our self-protectiveness, too.

Richard Rohr, *The Shape of God: Deepening the Mystery of the Trinity*



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CONTEMPLATIVE THEOLOGY

PART TWO *SECOND REFLECTIONS*

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LECTIO DIVINA

MEDITATION (2/2)

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE HOLY TRINITY: JOHN 14.8-17, 25-26

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me^L for anything, I will do it. ¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

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THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION (2/2)

Through Christ, we are already drawn up to life in the Trinity, "[for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.](#)" (Colossians 3.3) This is God who is "for us" (the Father), God who is "with us" (the Son) and God who is "within us" (the Holy Spirit) Because of this we are called and enabled to mirror ever more the life of the Trinity in our own lives: communion, relationship, participation, equality, mutual love and solidarity.

i. In what ways does our experience of communion and solidarity throw light on the Trinity?

ii. How does our celebration of the Sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist, help us experience the Trinity as relationship, participation, equality and mutual love?

iii. How do I experience God "for me" (the Father), God "with me" (the Son) and God "within me" (the Holy Spirit)?



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Richard Rohr, *The Shape of God: Deepening the Mystery of the Trinity*

Another word for this Paschal mystery is the *kenosis* of Christ: This is the process of self-emptying described by Paul in Philippians 2.5

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In Christ, we no longer need to grasp or to hold on to what was. We let ourselves be emptied and to fall more deeply into the life of the Trinity and so to be raised up, “exalted”, to new life in Christ.

This process of conforming ourselves to the Paschal mystery can and must take place in all the events of life, the big ones—death, divorce, separation, loss of a job, loss of face, shame, being misunderstood etc—and the smaller ones—anger, resentment, jealousy; indeed, all the “deadly” sins.

In this way our experience and celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ in Baptism and the Eucharist enables and strengthens us to experience all the events of life as opportunities to enter more deeply into that Mystery, **“this mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we present everyone mature in Christ.”** Colossians 1. 27-28



Diocese of Motherwell
Mission & Evangelisation

CONTEMPLATIVE THEOLOGY

PART TWO *THIRD REFLECTIONS*



LECTIO DIVINA

MEDITATION (2/3)

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE HOLY TRINITY: JOHN 14.8-17, 25-26

⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me^l for anything, I will do it. ¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

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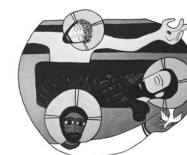
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION (2/3)

For the individual Christian, this process of being drawn ever more deeply into the life of the Trinity is called “sanctification” and takes place as we continue to allow ourselves to be conformed to the pattern of Christ’s Paschal Mystery (**“being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”** Philippians 3.11). This mystery we celebrate and make present supremely at the Eucharist, The Mass, through which we continue to gain access to Christ’s Sacrifice: his death, his being buried and his rising to new life. This is why the Eucharist is called the “Sacrifice of the Mass.”

i. Discuss your understanding of Christ’s “Paschal Mystery” and how the Eucharist makes it present to us.

ii. In what sense is the Mass the “source and summit” (Lumen Gentium, no. 11; cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1324) of the Christian life?

iii. Reflect on a life event which may have given you an opportunity to enter more fully into the Paschal Mystery of Christ and so into the life of the Trinity itself.



The death of a loved one is an example of a life event which presents an opportunity for being conformed to the Paschal Mystery. Spend some time reflecting on this and consider whether you find it helpful or not. Such a death with its pain and suffering is the opportunity we have to die with Christ and experience the deep separation, the pain and agony and perhaps the meaninglessness of the event.

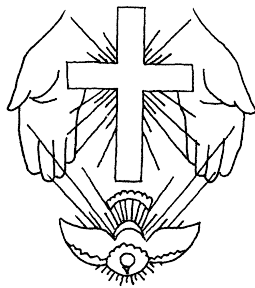
“With Christ I hang upon the cross...”

We are presented with a *crisis*- a moment of judgement and decision. We can choose to deny, to anaesthetise, to avoid or to rage at the pain. Or we can choose to unite ourselves to the Paschal Mystery, to experience and participate in the deep pain of the cross. As we enter the tomb, we enter the darkness of Christ’s death. Here we begin to reconfigure our lives in the new situation. We discover our powerlessness and are given the opportunity to allow God’s grace to rebuild us for life afterwards.

In all this we are not alone: Christ is present with us, bringing us to the Father through the power of the Spirit **“With Christ I hang upon the Cross, and yet I live, not I, but Christ lives in me.”** (Galatians 2.19-20) In the tomb, we empty ourselves of the spiritual blockages and obstacles which would have us stay in our pain and are made ready for what God is preparing us for. This time “in the tomb” may be brief but equally it could be a long period. It is a time for waiting and trusting. As we rise with Christ, we experience new life, perhaps beyond our imagining, filled with grace and peace. Our loved one remains dead, but we have been transformed and made ready for the next stage of our lives.



Diocese of Motherwell



CONTEMPLATIVE THEOLOGY

GUIDELINES FOR LECTIO DIVINA

Mission & Evangelisation



1. LECTIO (READ)

Read the text with one verse being read by one person. Let the words flow over and through you, not pausing at this point with questions or difficulties.

CHOSEN SCRIPTURE TEXT IS READ ALOUD AROUND THE GROUP

Now listen to the text again, this time perhaps being read by one person.

Focus on a word or a phrase (no more than 3 words) that strike you.

For a few minutes, repeat that word or phrase in silence to yourself, accepting it as the word of God to you in the present moment.

Savour the insight and feeling the word brings.

Hear the small, still voice of God saying: "This word is for you today."

2. MEDITATIO (MEDITATE)

Each person is encouraged to share the word or phrase, with no comment, with the group. After everyone has spoken, express to the other members of the group what your chosen word means to you right now and how it affirms, challenges, consoles, moves, touches your heart or affects you in any way. This is the moment when we "break the word" for each other and so build up not only ourselves but the whole Body of Christ represented by the group. Avoid the temptation to get involved in discussion at this point. What each person shares is accepted with deep respect and in appreciative silence.

3. ORATIO (PRAY)

We now enter a dialogue with God, heart to heart. Let the word chosen be the springboard for your response to the One who loves and accepts

you unconditionally. Any memories or thoughts, good or bad, evoked by this word, now hand over to God in trust. This may be a moment of profound thanksgiving, a loving request for healing, a prayer for a loved one, a flood of God's forgiveness. This encounter with the Father in Christ opens us to a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit within us and to the inner transformation assured us by God.

4. CONTEMPLATIO (CONTEMPLATE)

Finally, we rest in God's embrace. We put down any papers or books we have, sit upright on the chair with feet firmly on the floor and hands in our laps. We empty our minds of all words, thoughts and images as we imitate Christ who emptied himself and became as we are. Just as in centring prayer, we may want to use the word we have chosen to re-centre ourselves when, and it is when, distractions begin to fill our minds. This is very much a prayer of the body, sometimes called "embodied prayer" during which we may feel our limbs become heavier and our muscles relax. We may even feel a certain "lifting" of the body even though no movement has taken place. During this time, it is the Holy Spirit who is doing the work, allowing us to make room and space for His action. Don't worry if you feel "nothing is happening" or if you have to keep on returning to your word. The important thing is to remain still and complete the contemplative moment.



N.B. Fr Thomas Keating offers a more in depth reflection in his video on the [website contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org) on the Lectio Divina page and Sr Marie Testo gives a more succinct presentation on the same page. See also beingcatholic.org