

BRIEF REFLECTIONS

By Rick McKinney, 1998-2026

ALL THE WORLD IS A STAGE

It seems, as Shakespeare wrote, "All the world is a stage, and men and women are but players in it." However, the players, I believe, are actually performing in an audition so as to be chosen as actual participants in the divine nature both now and in the life to come.

EUCCHARIST - THE BODY OF CHRIST

If we are the body of Christ than it is we in the Eucharist who are in a sense "taken, blessed, broken, given, and consumed".

EUCCHARISTIC OFFERERS AND RECEIVERS

The Eucharist means thanks-giving, receiving and giving, and all the participants - Father, Son, Spirit, and the body of Christ present – are offering and receiving in one sacred communion of persons. The Eucharist encapsulates within itself the eternal banquet of giving and receiving in the Trinity of divine communion to which we have been invited. The Father gives the Son and receives the Son's offering of himself as well as those sharing his body. The Son gives himself and receives the offering of ourselves. We, the body of Christ offer ourselves and receive Christ in the consecrated body and blood of Christ. And all this offering and receiving is done in the unity of the Spirit. Even non-sentient creation in the wine and the bread share in this unity.

EVERYONE HAS THE SAME THREE PRIORITIES

Everyone seems to have the same three priorities in life. 1) Doing what I feel I want to do or not want to do; 2) Doing what I feel I have to do or not do; and 3) Doing what I feel I ought to do or not do. Of course, if one has the mind of Christ. who always did the Father's will, then doing or not doing becomes much more simple, even when it is tough.

FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE – FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT – PAST, FUTURE AND PRESENT

It seems to me that faith, hope and love have a generalized locus in the past, future and present and, in a way, so does the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God the Father created us in our past and the witnesses of others and our own positive experiences with God gradually builds a trustful faith that is generally earned from those past witnesses and experiences. For most of history Jesus is the long promised messianic hope in the future and a now is long-promised returning, future savior. However, the Holy Spirit communicates God's life and love in the present.

FROM JERUSALEM TO ROME

Both Saint Peter and Saint Paul began their journey in Jerusalem, the symbolic center of God's kingdom and power on earth, and at the end of their lives moved to Rome where they were martyred, the symbolic center of worldly power on earth at the time. But surprisingly, not much later, Rome destroyed Jerusalem and its temple and became itself the symbolic center of God's catholic or universal kingdom on earth.

GOD'S CONSUMING FIRE

Could it be that God's consuming or purgative fire of love and truth is generally the familiar and similar experience for all those here on earth, those in the purgatory (or the Judgement) and those in hell who continue to resist the truth? Those heaven, of course, have already been consumed by the fire of God's love and truth through the Holy Spirit.

GOD'S LOVE IS THE ONLY ESSENTIAL TRUTH

It would seem that all essential truth flows from the one truth that God is Love. From that one truth flows the truth of the Trinity for love requires that there be more than Oneness. From it flows the truth of the incarnation and death of the Savior for true love is sacrificial in nature. From it flows the truth of the resurrection, for love triumphs even over death. From it also flows the truth of our final sharing in God's nature and character, for love is transformational.

A GOOD HOMILY OR SERMON

A good homily or sermon ought to be Interesting, Informative, Insightful, and Inspiring. It also helps if one repeats the main points at the end.

LIVING IN CHRIST IS SYMBIOTIC

He in us and we in Him like a sponge in the ocean. He lives in us and we live in Him. Of course, we are the ones dependent on Him and yet He desires our participation in glorifying Him by becoming gloriously like Him, and while depending on Him and interdependently with others in His body, we spread His glorious work upon and to all others.

LOVE DEFINED:

- 1) Recognizing and Appreciating the Unique Value of a Person;
- 2) Wanting (and Praying) for the Loved One's Best Interest; and
- 3) Working Wisely (and perhaps Prayerfully and Sacrificially) for the Loved One's Best Interest.

LOVE IN UNION:

Those persons in Marital Union, Holy Communion, and Divine Union all voice the same words. I am in my beloved. My beloved is in me. We are one together.

LOVE IS NOT CHEAP:

Love without sacrifice is cheap and not worthy of the name (Jn. 3:16).

LOVING GOD, NEIGHBOR AND OUR SELF IS ETERNAL LIFE:

Eternal life consists in truly knowing and loving God, one another and ourselves. So, as Jesus said, the first commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And the second is like it, love your neighbor as yourself (Lk. 10:27, Jn. 17:3, 26).

OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE ENCOUNTERS WITH CHRIST

The Church has rightly established in Christ its sacraments or ordinances for coming into an encounter with Christ such as baptism, confession, first communion, confirmation, ordination and others. Now, these objective experiences are not always or necessarily personal in nature but may lead to personal experiences and encounters of Christ which are desirable. In the early church and in some evangelical or Pentecostal churches baptism may have followed a conversion experience and elders praying over someone may elicit a subjective experience of being baptized in the Spirit with speaking in tongues. However, while subjective experiences of encountering Christ are important to one's personal faith and prayer life, since they are subjective in nature, they are often quite varied and feeling based and thus not as certain and reliable as objective means and measures of one's faith experience which the Church believes God ordinarily works through.

PETER SAID I AM NOT, AND JESUS SAID I AM

Thoughts on Good Friday: I note in today's long reading of the Gospel of John that in the Garden twice when the soldiers ask for Jesus the Nazorean, Jesus says "I AM," but twice the first words that Peter says in the courtyard of the high priest, are, "I am not." And those words of denial came after his related last words about his willingness to lay down his life for Jesus. The truth is, we are all Peter, not just fearful deniers of the truth to save our own skins, or those living in denial, or those who do not know their true selves, but more to the point, we are all not the I AM. We are not God or even little gods. Jesus is the only I AM, and yet he loves and laid down his life for all of we little "I am nots."

THE PRODIGAL SON'S INHERITANCE AND OUR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST

The parable of the prodigal resembles our own story in Christ, but instead of our older brother resenting our return, Jesus Christ, our older brother, went searching for us and gave

his life for us. Normally one waits for an inheritance after one's parents die. The prodigal son could not wait for his father to die so he asked for it beforehand and was given his one third share for in those days the oldest brother got the double portion. If his older brother died while rescuing him then he would get all his brother's inheritance which he did not deserve when he returned home. Our inheritance in Christ is similar for Christ did die for us and we do get his inheritance which we do not deserve, but because Christ was raised from the dead, we, together with Christ, receive an eternal inheritance and we can begin using it now on this earth and receive far more in heaven. Is this not a great and merciful God and is this not a great inheritance deal?

RESSURECTED LIVES OF THE SAINTS NOW IN HEAVEN

Since heaven is not in our chronological space and time but has its own everlasting time and space could it not be that the saints in heaven already share in the bodily resurrection as well as sharing in the beatific vision and God's divine nature and do not need to wait for the end of chronological space and time. Saint Paul even wrote that the dead in Christ will rise first and not be preceded by those who are alive (1 Thess. 4:13-18). We also know that bodies of many saints who have passed on have flesh that show no signs or only limited signs of corruption and could not this also be a sign of their current incorruptible bodies in heaven?

The SPITIT GOD HAS AND HAS NOT GIVEN YOU

God has not given you a spirit of self-sufficiency or of insufficiency, but one of godly power. Nor has He given you a spirit of self-interest or indifference, but one of godly love. And He has not given you a spirit of self-indulgence or of impulsiveness, but one of godly control and a sound mind. *Adapted from 1 Timothy 1:7.*

T-A-A-R-A-A – A FAMILIAR WAY TO PRAY

T – Thanking God our Heavenly Father for all His many gifts and blessings.

A – Adoring and worshiping (hallowing) our wonderful God for who He is and what He does.

A – Asking God to do as He desires in us and that His kingdom come and His will be done.

R – Repenting for our own wayward debts and inattentiveness and forgiving others.

A – Asking in petition for our own daily needs, especially to become more like Christ.

A – Asking in intercession for the needs of others: family, friends, neighbors, leaders, those who are hurting or have hurt others, and those who have passed this life or are passing.

The TEST OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH

It would seem that a key to determining essential religious truth is the impact of that truth on forming godly character.

The TEST OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:

Religious experiences, be they conversion experiences, sacramental experiences, divine encounter experiences, listening experiences, praying experiences, scriptural reading experiences, ministering experiences, receiving ministry experiences, and other religious experiences are meant to lead to godly transformation. Otherwise, they may be for nought.

TRANSCENDENCY AND THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

God as Father is aptly named because God, the creator is first of all transcendent. He is not like us. He is Spirit and is outside of space and time which He created. He is omniscient, omnipotent, and omni-good. Fathers beget or begin a process, conception, that takes place inside of a mother for a long period of time. Human mothers are immanently involved in this nine month process and there is close biological, physiological and psychological (usually) connection between mothers and their children, like an invisible umbilical cord. For instance, there are generally far more complaints interfering mothers-in-law than those of fathers-in-law. A father often has to choose to step up for his children, especially if he is not married to their mother. However, good fathers often are drawn psychologically to their children and the choice of stepping up is not a problem, but usually the primary caretaker is the mother. It is more proper to call God father because He chooses to be committed to His image and likeness and He chooses to be drawn immanently and intimately into our care, which He did in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God also has maternal nurturing attributes, but God as mother overemphasizes His non-inherent immanence and female goddesses often are related to earthly fertility cults. And it was not for nothing that Old Testament prophets railed against such cults. Calling Catholic priests Father is proper for they are not only “Persona Christ”, but “Persona Patri” as well.

WATCH THE DIRECTIONAL PATH OF YOUR LIFE

Watch and guard the thoughts of your head and the feelings of your heart for they direct the decisions and choices of your will. Watch and guard the decisions and choices of your will for they direct the words, actions and inactions of your daily behavior. Watch and guard the words, actions and inactions of your daily behavior for they direct the general habits that you forge in life. Watch and guard the general habits that you forge in life as they direct the formation of your soul’s character. Watch and guard the formation of your soul’s character for it directs your destiny in this life and the next. *Adapted from various other authors.*

The WOMAN - MARY OUR MOTHER

God did not win our deliverance by the deeds of a mighty general, or by the proclamation of a courageous politician, or by the invention of a creative scientist, or by the words of an

inspired prophet, no, He delivered us by the simple but wondrous act of a woman giving birth to a child, and that child growing up and giving up his life in death for us all. From before time began God desired and chose a mother for His only begotten Son (1 Eph. 1:4, Gal. 1:15). She is the same Mother of all the living in Christ, the new Eve (Gen. 3:20) and as the mother of our glorious king, she is more than capable to present our requests to God with a special wrapping of love (1 Kgs 2:19-20). We all need a good mother and isn't grand that in all the world we have but one mother. And she is good because God shared his own earthly mother with us (Jn. 19:26-27) and she, while no goddess, is now glorified in heaven (Rev. 12:1-6, 17) and intercedes most graciously. We just need to ask.

WOMEN ARE THE LOVELIEST OF ALL GOD'S CREATURES

Women are the loveliest of all God's creatures and the loveliest of all is Mary, our Mother. Women are remarkable for from their midst they bear forth persons created for eternity. No angel of heaven nor demon of hell can do such wonders. It is also women who often are the comforters and care givers. It was they who were at the cross, comforting Jesus. It was men who fled or kept handing him over and over to other men and to his suffering.