

"HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT, BECAUSE THE LOVE OF GOD HAS BEEN POURED OUT INTO OUR HEARTS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN TO US."

WHEN I WAS IN THE SEMINARY, THE FIRST PART OF THAT VERSE WAS VERY MEANINGFUL TO ME: AT THAT TIME THE TRANSLATION WAS: *THIS HOPE DOES NOT DISAPPOINT US.*

THOSE WORDS HAVE CARRIED ME THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES BECAUSE THEY TELL US GOD HAS A PLAN, EVEN IF WE DO NOT KNOW HOW IT WILL UNFOLD ITSELF OVER THE COURSE OF TIME.

WITH THE PANDEMIC, THE VIOLENCE, THE POLITICS, THE ECONOMIC REALITIES, THE QUESTION FOR OUR COMMUNITY IS THIS: HOW DO WE SPEAK OF GOD IN A CULTURE THAT'S PATHOLOGICALLY DISTRACTED, DISTRUSTS RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE AND CHURCH INSTITUTIONS, AND YET CARRIES ITS OWN MORAL ENERGY AND VIRTUE?

THE ANSWER IS FOUND IN SEEING JESUS AS GOD EMPTYING HIMSELF FOR US. THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE PARENTS KNOW THAT THERE IS A RISK IN HAVING CHILDREN. HOW WILL THEY TURN OUT? WE DO NOT KNOW. AS I MENTIONED TWO WEEKS AGO, MY FATHER DID NOT EXPECT ONE OF HIS SONS TO TURN OUT TO BE A PRIEST.

IN THE INCARNATION, GOD, LIKE A GOOD MOTHER OR FATHER, IS MORE CONCERNED THAT THE CHILDREN ARE STEERED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION THAN THAT GOD BE EXPLICITLY RECOGNIZED AND ACKNOWLEDGED FOR WHO HE IS AND THANKED FOR IT. GOD, LIKE ANY PARENT, TAKES A HUGE RISK. TO HAVE CHILDREN IS TO LEAVE ONESELF PAINFULLY VULNERABLE. IT'S ALSO TO BE CALLED UPON FOR AN UNDERSTANDING, A PATIENCE, AND A SELF-DETHRONING THAT, LITERALLY, CAN EMPTY YOU OF SELF. THAT'S AS TRUE OF GOD AS OF ANY MOTHER OR FATHER.

TO "SELF-EMPTY" IN THE WAY JESUS DOES MEANS BEING PRESENT WITHOUT DEMANDING THAT YOUR PRESENCE BE RECOGNIZED & IMPORTANCE ACKNOWLEDGED; GIVING WITHOUT DEMANDING THAT YOUR GENEROSITY BE RECIPROCATED; IT MEANS BEING INVITING RATHER THAN THREATENING.

LONG AGO, PEOPLE LEARNED THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD, AND THAT GOD *"FOUND DELIGHT IN THE HUMAN RACE."* THINK OF THE MANY STORIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT ABOUT GOD'S PURSUIT OF PEOPLE, LABORING TO MAKE A LOVING AND HOLY COVENANT WITH THEM: *"I WILL BE YOUR GOD AND YOU WILL BE MY PEOPLE."* LIKE A MARRIAGE AGREEMENT.

WELL, AS IN A MARRIAGE ARRANGEMENT, GOD BECAME AT TIMES ANGRY, HURT, DELIGHTED, SPURNED, GLORIFIED, IGNORED, PRAISED AND REJECTED. BUT GOD KEPT COMING BACK AND BACK TO RENEW THE COVENANT THROUGH THE WORDS OF HIS PROPHETS. GOD'S LOVE REMAINED STEADFAST, EVEN IF OURS SOMETIMES DOES NOT. THEN WE FOUND OUT THAT GOD'S NATURE HAD ALWAYS CONSISTED OF ANOTHER COMPONENT!

GOD'S HIS VERY NATURE WAS ALWAYS TO RELATE TO OTHERS, TO *"POUR FORTH,"* AS THE FIRST READING PUTS IT, AND TO RECEIVE BACK. THE "SECOND PERSON" HAD BEEN AT ONE WITH THE "FIRST PERSON" FOR ALL ETERNITY.

SO, THEN THIS SECOND PERSON BECAME ONE OF US, CALLED BY US THE WORD. WE SAW HIM. JESUS LAUGHED AND CRIED AND PREACHED AND TURNED OVER TABLES AND CURED PEOPLE AND WAS LOYAL TO HIS FRIENDS EVEN UNTO THE END. HE SAID, *"EVERYTHING THE FATHER HAS IS MINE"* THAT'S HOW WE KNEW HE WAS THE WORD AND THE WORD WAS GOD. SOMEHOW, TWO PERSONS IN ONE GOD.

BUT THEN CAME A THIRD REVELATION ABOUT THE TRINITY. JESUS HINTS ABOUT IT BY SAYING *"I HAVE MUCH MORE TO TELL YOU, BUT YOU CANNOT BEAR IT NOW."* OUR SMALL SOULS WOULD BURST WITH THE GREATNESS OF GOD—UNLESS GOD IN A WAY TONED DOWN THE RHETORIC AND BEGAN TO ACTUALLY DWELL WITHIN US, GUIDING OUR UNDERSTANDING.

SO, JESUS PROMISED TO POUR OUT THE HOLY SPIRIT INTO US. HE TELLS US THAT THE SPIRIT IS GOD. *"EVERYTHING THAT THE FATHER HAS IS MINE; FOR THIS REASON, I TOLD YOU THAT HE, THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL TAKE FROM WHAT IS MINE AND DECLARE IT TO YOU."*

DO WE GET IT? EVERYTHING THE FATHER HAS BELONGS TO THE WORD. EVERYTHING THAT JESUS THE WORD HAS BELONGS TO THE SPIRIT. THE SPIRIT IS THE THIRD PERSON OF GOD. THE SPIRIT BESTOWS US AND THE WHOLE EARTH BACK UPON THE FATHER, THUS CLOSING THE CIRCLE, CIRCLE BEING A SYMBOL OF ETERNITY ITSELF SINCE IT HAS NO BEGINNING OR END.

WHAT ALIVENESS, WHAT MOVEMENT THERE IS IN GOD: SPEAKING, REACHING OUT, FLOWING FORTH, RECEIVING BACK. GOD IS CONSTANT MOTION, A DYNAMISM IN WHICH EVERYTHING IS ALWAYS CHANGING, YET ALWAYS REMAINING THE SAME BECAUSE IT IS LOVE. WE ARE INVITED INTO THAT CIRCLE OF LOVE. EVEN IN TODAY'S DIFFICULT WORLD, GOD IS THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL LIGHT AND THAT BRINGS ME TO EXPLAIN TODAY ABOUT OUR CANDLES AND THE MEANS BY WHICH THEY REMIND US OF THAT LIGHT AT THE EUCHARIST AND INDEED ALL THE TIME.

Quoting from the General Instruction of the Roman Missal by Pope Paul VI

"In accordance with traditional custom, near the tabernacle a special lamp, fueled by oil or wax, should shine permanently to indicate the presence of Christ and honor it."

Those words were published by the Vatican on April 6, 1969 while I was still a Senior at Aquinas.

Let me tell you a little story about my last parish. We put 6 LED lights in the upper sanctuary. It brightened up the cross and the tabernacle very well. The only problem was that the light was so bright you could not tell whether the Sanctuary Lamp was actually lit or just reflecting the LED light. The red glass was a cylinder, very dark and very heavy. So, I invented a way to solve the problem. Keeping the brass pedestal, we installed a wooden box with red glass on three sides and a glass candle inside. I gave it to my successor on his first visit.

Now there are three common ways of placing a Sanctuary Lamp. One is on a pedestal. Another is wall mounted. Another is hanging it from the ceiling and lowering it by means of a pulley.

Still another was used at Holy Ghost Church when I was there. I hope I never experience it again. The lamp hung permanently above the daily Mass altar, also visible from the main church. Every Monday, I had to climb on a chair, then climb onto the altar, remove the glass candle, hand it off to the sacristan, and then replace it with a new lighted candle. Of course, I was about 40 years younger.

Here at SEAS, we now have a wall-mounted sanctuary lamp visible throughout the church and very easily changed from the back.

Descriptions of our Candles at SEAS is found in today's bulletin. June 19, 2022