

Being the Christ of the Trinity: The Mystery of Jesus Forsaken



The Gravity of the Word “As”

“And now I am going to show you a way that is greater than all of them” (1 Cor. 12:31). “Love one another *as* I have loved you” (John 13:34). “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you” (John 15:9).

“The new command of love is the basic law of human perfection and hence of the world’s transformation” (*Gaudium et spes*, 38).

What are the implications of this greatest and new commandment, that we ought to love one another *as* Christ loved us, and *as* the Father has loved Christ? We have seen that Christ is our entrance into Trinitarian Life. Now we will see how our putting on of Christ will unfold.

Exploring Together

- 1) “I Have Loved You.” → 2) Consubstantial with the Father and with Us: Sacrifice at the Heart of God. → 3) Hallmarks of the Art of Loving: Mary of the Trinity.

1. “I Have Loved You” — Kenosis of the Son of God.



The First Movement: “And the Word was made Flesh”--Wondrous Exchange

“The Son of God became the son of man so that the human being by uniting himself to the Word and so receiving the divine sonship, should become the Son of God” (Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, III, 19, 1).

“In assuming human nature, the Word assumes universal humanity; as such, an individual person might sum up the whole people. “[T]he

distinction of this kind between ‘mine’ and ‘yours’ is abolished by love, which over and above distinction also recognizes the unity/identity of the I and the You. That which appears absurd to natural justice becomes natural to love. Above all, however, Christ is not in fact ‘another’ in relation to each human being, since the New Adam enfolds/embraces in his essence by nature and by the sympathy of his love every human individual. He is the universal man” (Sergei Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, 431-432).

“With his incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some way with every human being” (*Gaudium et spes*, 22).

Summary Points

1. Driven by love for his creation, the second Person of the Trinity becomes a human being, taking unto himself a human nature, thus becoming a true mediator of a new covenant (Hebrews 9:15).
2. The resulting bond between God and man is not only vertical, but also horizontal: he is identified with the human nature that is present in all human beings, men and women, throughout time and space. This is a breakthrough in universal humanity amongst each individual person.
3. We are ontologically made into a corporate personality by the Divine Word’s incarnate *kenosis* as a human being.
4. The eternal Son descends into what is infinitely beneath him so that humankind, indeed the whole of history and the world itself, might be divinized by entering with him and through him into the life and communion that is the Trinity.

The Second Movement: “God made him to be sin”--The Misery of Human Nature

“Christ takes me whole and entire within himself with all my misery in order to destroy in himself evil, like fire that dissolves in itself the wax”
(Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 30*, 6)

“The knowledge of God without that of man’s misery causes pride. The knowledge of man’s misery without that of God causes despair. The knowledge of Jesus Christ constitutes the middle cause, because in him we find both God and our misery” (Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, 526, 527)



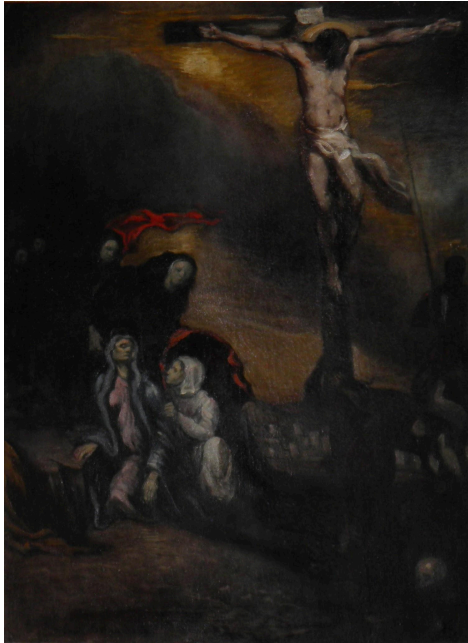
“Only when I come thither shall I be truly a man. Leave me to imitate the Passion of my God.”
(Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans*, 6).

In the Incarnation, the Word made flesh lives to the full the consequences of “the *reductio ad hominem* of the Logos of God.” But the very same *reductio* that accomplishes his loving mission is the very “*reductio ad Deum* of the man Jesus and, in him, of all and everything” (Piero Coda, *Il Logos e il nulla*, 208).

“Jesus goes directly to the root. He does not involve himself in the transgression, which exists and is to be rejected, but he takes upon himself the situation of the absence of God which is the effect of each and every sin” (Hubertus Blaumeiser, “*Un mediatore che é nulla*,” in *Nuova Umanita*, XX, 396).

Summary Points

1. The core of the anguish of Jesus is a result of his entering, through love for sinners, into the situation brought about by sin.
2. As a father or mother, while hating the immorality indulged by a prodigal child, still suffers with and for that child, so too does God, who is Love, enter the godforsakenness of our situation.
3. The result of this second movement is a total transformation of human darkness, misery, evil, and the ugliness of evil: now, there is a Light that has entered into those spaces that shows the way of hope, freedom, beauty, and goodness.
4. Our own individual darkens become spaces where Light can enter; more than this, those are perhaps the only spaces where we can truly see and feel the reality of the Light of Christ.



The Third Movement: “That God may be all in all”--The Nothingness of Jesus

“Having made himself sin and therefore disunity, individuality, Jesus as the abandoned one can be the partner also of the last sinner of the world, and can be separated from all, because he, as sin, is seen in all the sinners and all the sinners can see themselves in him” (Blaumeiser, 403).

“The condition of death brought about by sin is not a punishment, or is at the most a self-inflicted one which God turns into a cure. Death is the result of rejecting the living God, excluding the Creator from his creation. But God was to take flesh and die, in order to fill death itself with his love and turn it into resurrection for the human race” (Olivier Clément, *Oh Human Being*, 14).

“See, I return good for evil, love for injuries, and for deeper wounds a deeper love” (Peter Chrysologus, *Sermo* 108)

“Jesus forsaken has filled every void, illuminated every darkness, accompanied every solitude, annulled every suffering, cancelled every sin...When Jesus forsaken suffered, he took away love from himself and gave it to men and women making them the children of God...Jesus is made nothingness; he gives his all and this all was not lost but entered the souls of humankind. In this way Jesus is truly Mediator: a Nothing that joins heaven and earth because he had already operated this unity in himself” (Chiara Lubich, *Meditations*)

“Jesus, having annihilated himself out of love, to the point of making himself *sin, absolute nothingness, hell*, is re-found as the Holy One, the All, God, Paradise, and with himself he made his brothers and sisters, for whom he suffered and died, saints, All, God, Paradise” (Blaumeiser, 405)

Summary Points

1. The consequence of Jesus’s total identification with our misery is that his presence becomes a concrete reality in all our moments of suffering, abandonment, and feelings of negativity.
2. More than this, one can postulate that the greatest presence of Christ is revealed in precisely those moments, because it is in those moments that we become completely identified with his great act of love, the abandonment of himself at the cross.
3. If this is true for us, then what does it mean when we encounter those who suffer? There, we can experience in them, the concrete presence of Christ.

2. Consubstantial with the Father and with Us: Sacrifice at the Heart of God and in Humanity.

“God is Love, and he who lives in love lives in God and God lives in him” (John 4:16). “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you” (John 15:9). “Having loved his own in the world, he loved them to the end” (John 13:1). “Greater love has no one that this, that someone lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). “When Jesus had received the wine, he said, ‘It is finished’” (John 19:30).



1. Christ is most glorious in his crucifixion; on Christian doctrine, the nature of God is most manifest in the passion and death of Christ...there is no greater love than the love of a person who lays down his life for the sake of another (John 15:13)...the nature of God is most evident in Christ's crucifixion because love is most evident there.
2. If it is the [reality] of the presence and magnification of the image of God in human beings that makes them glorious, and if the nature of the love that is God is most evident in the wounds of the resurrected Christ, then there may be some way in which the wounds of human suffering could make human beings resemble God too.
3. There is a way to understand the wounds of a person's suffering as intensifying for that person the image of God in him.
4. If the image of God is intensified...then to that extent, [someone] is more what he was meant to be.
5. With his wounds [a person] is also more his true self.
6. On this way of thinking about the image of God in [someone's] true self, there is something more glorious about [him] with wounds than there would have been had there been no Fall and no suffering.

God is Love. → God the Father. → God the Son. → The Son reveals the shape of this love as sacrifice. → Love = sacrifice. → Love = sacrifice = God. → God is what Love, is what sacrifice is. → We are at our best when we live in God, when we live in sacrifice, to the point of suffering and dying for others. *We begin to see how the crucified Son sets up “from within” the Trinity and “from below” in humanity a new and universal relationality bound up in love most clearly expressed as sacrifice. Our wounds and sufferings become revelations of God's glory.*



3. Hallmarks of the Art of Loving: Mary of the Trinity.

“I have left the best wine to the end” (Aidan Nichols, *Romance and System*, 425).

“So understood, corresponding to the nature of marriage, that union [mother and son] involves a belonging together of both persons in *one* organic whole, in which they grow together with one another, a belonging to and investing with each other, in which Mary, as one affiliated to the Logos, is fully taken possession of by him, while the Logos, as poured out and implanted in her, takes her as a companion and helpmate into the most inward, comprehensive, and continuous

communion of life with himself” (Matthias Scheeben, *Handbuch* V/2, 350).

“Considered as a shoot of humanity, she is its highest flower, as Christ its highest fruit. It is through him that she is the highest, and at the same time she is the heavenly, spiritual mystical flower (the ‘mystical rose,’ the ‘spiritual lily’), because in her and from her Christ was brought forth as the fruit at once of earth and heaven” (Scheeben, 369).

“Mary, as the flower of humankind, upturned toward heaven, received, in the conception of the Logos, the dew and the light of heaven for all humanity, and formed the throne for Emmanuel as he came down from heaven as the principle of grace, so is she for all mankind, as their chief member, their organ in the entry on the mystical marriage with the Logos concluded in her and through her” (Scheeben, 371).

The Hallmarks of the Art of Loving

1. Relationality—The meaning of being is self-communicating love.
2. Reciprocity—“The church is the event of reciprocal love” (Bonaventure, *Hexameron* I, 4).
3. Perichoresis—“As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they be also in us” (Jn 17:21).
4. Kenosis—“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mk. 15:34; Mt. 27:46).
5. Unity—“Christ brought total newness by bringing himself” (Irenaeus, IV, 34, 1).

Reflections in the Trinity

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