

## **Getting Into the Flow of God**

### **Reflection on Trinity Sunday, May 31, 2015 by David Perry**

I'd like to kick off this reflection by asking for your blessing. Take a moment to pray this prayer for me...

#### **The Prayer of Blessing**

Brother / Sister \_\_\_\_\_

You are of us ... of me.

We are not separate.

I Bless You ...

Yet not I – But Christ in me – Blesses You.

WE give you permission to be who you are.

To Love and Create;

To Fall and to Fail;

And to Rise Again into the LOVE -

That You Already are.

Thanks for your prayer ... now let's unpack what that prayer has to teach us...

When I was 13 entered a citywide tennis tournament. My folks took me to The Ottawa Athletic Club. We walked in and I've never been inside a 'Club' before. As I register for the Singles Draw – the guy asks me if I'd like to also play doubles. I didn't want to. I don't like it as much, plus I didn't know anyone else. He says, no problem – they'll take care of it and match me up. I reluctantly agreed.

Well in my first singles match I get smoked. I might have won a couple games, but I was out of the Singles Draw. Now, the Doubles was another story. We won our first game. We won our second game. I should add at this point that the guy I'm teamed up with is amazing ... he's serving cannon balls. Yeah, it turns out he was the number 1 seed in the tournament ... and the best junior in Ottawa. We make it to the finals – which we win. Now I'm not sure how many points I even participated in ... let alone how many I won. My partner was simply that talented and dominating over our opponents.

Now here was my dilemma ... maybe you can see it. I never knew what to do with that victory. How do I describe it even? I can't say I won the doubles title – though I did. Or even that we won the title...that's not accurate either. A couple years I actually prayed "God, what was that about? Please teach me something."

By that point in my life ... I'd come to know – pretty well, I thought – the writings of St Paul. Such as the second reading this weekend ... "You received a spirit of adoption which cries 'Abba' Father."

This may have affected the answer ... what I got about the tennis victory. We won because the other guy carried me, and I rode on his coat-tails. Basically he won the majority of the points (if not all them), and I was along for the ride.

With this - I could really open up to the heart of Paul's 'gospel.' For Paul – his term – "living In Christ – a term he uses 26 times -- is him saying "all of life is a riding on the coat-tails of the Holy Spirit."

Look at the reading ... It's the Spirit in us that cries "Abba, Father." In Galatians Ch 2 ... He says, and NOT symbolically, "It's not I who lives, but Christ who lives in me" ... "It's not I who lives, but Christ who lives in me"

In chapter 3 ...Paul goes on to tell us that IN CHRIST ... there are no categories ... no distinctions ... no male or female; Jew or gentile, black or white, slave or free.

I want to highlight this spiritual masterpiece of Paul. We usually hear pieces of Paul where he is made out to be a moralist ... or a sexist ... or a puritan. Some social justice folks don't like that he seemed to ignore slavery as a problem. But it's true that we frequently hear pieces of Paul ... on grace, freedom, life in the Spirit...like today). But think for a moment .... in your church life (Catholic or otherwise) – how many times have you heard a teaching specifically on “It's no longer I who lives, But Christ who lives in me?” Probably not too often.

Let me give you a sense of how ridiculous this is. Say you went to study science and took a course on Isaac Newton ... and they never mentioned that he discovered gravity. They never even mentioned that he had any interest in it at all.

That's just as ridiculous, as not knowing the heart of Paul who says “for me to Live is Christ.” This revelation is what jazzed Paul – because it was born out of his encounter with the Risen Lord ... He experiences being drawn into the flow of God ... where he knew – that his life was merely a riding on the coat-tails of the Spirit. For Paul this is the foundation of God's universal health care plan. Everybody's covered.

The issue for him is that everyone is in the Flow of the Spirit, and they can know it. This is the issue! Not your life circumstances -- slave or free ... married or not ... gay or not. Freedom for Paul, is an inside job. The issue is to pray and know who's praying. To heal and to know who's healing. To breathe and to know who's breathing. To serve at the Supper Table and know who's serving. Even perception ... to see God ... is to ride on the coat-tails of the Spirit who sees and knows and merely gives us a glimpse of that knowing.

For 1700 years we've basically ignored the heart and mind of Paul. And what's it been replaced with? This weekend marks the end of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Process around the pain and abuse of aboriginal children caused by the residential school system in Canada ... over 100 years of trying to “kill the Indian in the Child.” Beyond the physical, sexual and psychological abuse ... which is surely bad enough – is the Christian narrative being offered – both then and still today ... whether Catholic or bible fundamentalist ... it was / and is / essentially a “burn, burn, burn” mentality. Burn the Indian out of the Indian, burn the gay out of the gay; burn pleasure out of human sexuality; burn the human out of the human ... if you don't get purified in this life; well we've got purgatory to burn out all that is “offensive” to God. And if that doesn't work – well you burn for eternity.

Does any of that sound like Jesus who proclaimed the “Kingdom of God is among you” or the heart of Paul that states, “it's not I who lives, but Christ who lives in me?” Jesus critiqued the church of his day, saying you lay heavy burdens on people, and don't lend a finger to help them. Have we not, for most of our lives (and the centuries before us) been denied access to THE narrative of hope and life in the Spirit?

And by the way, if you're a woman, or you're gay ... and you think the church isn't working for; let me tell you ... that burn, burn, burn narrative doesn't work for anyone.

And we, as with Aboriginals ... when you take away the only story line that makes sense ... that gives life and hope ... and replace it with that kind of moralistic reward-punishment system...then stamp it with authority... You're going to get despair, lost-ness, and the resulting addictions and distractions that the little self needs to survive the loss of a life giving narrative.

Thomas Merton says, and I agree by experience, that stuff we call “sins” ... are really symptoms of the greater pain of one who sees themselves as outside the radius of God. The problem for Merton, as for Paul, is one of identity ... one has to learn to see themselves inside God.

Let me wrap this into the Trinity – which is what we celebrate this weekend.

One day I was supply teaching a grade 11 world religions class. It was a hot Friday afternoon ... the kids ambled into the hot portable classroom after a school BBQ ... half the class didn't even show. No lesson plan was left. This was perfect. I thought I'd be playful and see what they're learning in Catholic school so far. So I asked specifically “Who's the fourth person of the Trinity?”

One guy raised his hand and says Bob Marley. Which is a great answer ... he's being a little flip. But that's cool ... But I only give full marks for Bruce Springsteen. Onto the next young man who is hung up on the math problem, “Sir, you can't have 4 people in a trinity.” I respond, “look we're Catholics and we've got three persons in One God, so don't be giving me your math anxiety. Soon, a hand goes up at the back ... now I've got the lights off to keep the classroom cool ... so I can't really see her well. But I say “okay miss, who's the fourth person of the Trinity?” And she says “I am. It's each of us.”

In the Gospel today we hear about the commission given to the disciples ... to go forth -- baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Baptizing really means an immersion ... an experience. But before that even, how about we start with us?

Remember when I said that for Merton and Paul, the issue is that one has to learn to see themselves inside God ... or inside this flow of love. Now get a load of this ... this is GOD's job!. It's the work of the Spirit to draw us into the flow ... to show us what we need to see. OUR job – is to give God the permission.

Can we give God permission to immerse us in the Divine Dance of Love?

The Trinity ... this mysterious flow of love between persons ... abides in the soul of everyone ... my soul, your soul. How about we give God the green light to do unto us whatever it is we need to awaken ... to be resurrected in the “who” ... of who we really are.

Our vocation is to live our lives immersed in the Dance of Love as the fourth person of the Trinity. Is this a narrative you can live with?

I'd like to offer two words to nurture our participation in the Divine Dance ... practice and permission.

Practice is remembering who we really are. When I asked you to pray that prayer at the beginning– it reminds us that praying is one thing, but knowing who's praying is quite another.

So forgive someone today ... let them off the hook ... but remember who's is letting them off the hook, and who is riding on the coat-tails of the Spirit.

Give thanks for one thing today, and remember it's the Spirit in you giving thanks.

And let's give God permission ... the green light ... to act in us; Teach us, show us, draw us into the Dance of Love and this great knowing. Pray this as often as you think to ... pray without ceasing, Paul says. (just remember who's praying).

I think one of the reasons we need Church ... we need each other ... is -- because the weight of this mystery of living in Christ is too big ... too good yet too fleeting ... too much of a challenge for our mind – which alone can't bear this much good news. It can't possibly be this good can it?

**It is this good.** Paul knew ... every Christian mystic has known it. And we can know it ... if we give God permission to awaken us, touch us, draw us into the dance. We're actually already there ... we just don't know it.