

The Great Dance

In my first seminary class, the professor asked all of us to imagine the Trinity in a great dance. He said picture the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as whirling dervishes — spinning round and round, faster and faster, so that you can no longer tell who is who. And as they dance, a joyous laughter spills out, illustrating the unsurpassable love that binds the three of them together.

The classroom became silent when the professor added that each one of us is invited into the middle of that dance. We were taken aback to learn that we, too, are called to experience the joy and love and hope and delight of the Trinity.

To miss this dance is to miss it all. To live on the sidelines of the great dance is to check out of the greatest adventure God has conceived for humanity. Even so, most of us will spend an awful lot of time doing what we construe as very important, only to find we have settled for the role of a wallflower.

When we've had enough of watching the dance go on without us, we will bow our heads in submission to worship the Trinity with loving abandon and look up to discover we're finally in the middle of the dance floor, in the warm embrace of God.

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are" (1 John 3:1).

Jesus Christ

I say repeatedly to the congregation I serve, "If you want to know what God is up to, look at Jesus Christ." That's why John calls him the Logos, the Word (John 1:1-5). Jesus Christ is the intention of God. His mission is to reconcile humanity with the Father — to get us back in the great dance with the Trinity.

Jesus spent very little time with those convinced that they had the right answers and instead extended himself to noted sinners and earnest seekers. Those who had come to the end of their ropes and figured out that their efforts to improve themselves had "availed them nothing" were the recipients of Jesus' ministry. He had no patience for those who imagined they sat in the place of God.

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, not of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12-13).

The Holy Spirit

In *The Shack*, William P. Young states, "The Holy Spirit is the restorer of what has been lost." We spend much of our lives disbelieving that humans are fashioned to exist within the embrace of the Trinity. The world would have us think that we are merely individually wrapped flesh-colored bags

of protoplasm, and even many Christians contend there is a huge chasm between God and ourselves.

The Son, Jesus, opens again the gate to Eden, back to a right relationship with God, to a home where we "hear the sound of God walking through" our gardens (Gen. 3:8). The Holy Spirit, then, is our escort back to this paradise.

In our sin we have forsaken our true selves. To get back into the great dance means we must change our speech, our ways, and our attitudes to imitate Jesus Christ. That's too tall an order to carry out alone. The fear, anger, and hopelessness we've been carrying around so long will sabotage our best efforts. But we have One who will restore us to where we belong.

"For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Rom. 8:15).

Humanity

Humanity would rather dance alone. The last thing we want is a partner to lead us. Despite so many choices, only one fruit offered Adam and Eve the chance to be like God (Gen. 2:9, 3:1-6). Our great-grandparents grabbed the one fruit God said was off-limits and we've all been gorging ourselves on it ever since.

Only one avenue will lead us back to the great dance. It's the biggest step we'll ever take — the step of humility. We must get over ourselves. Humility levels the dance floor because no one gets into the great dance without admitting he or she has made a mess of most everything and urgently needs a guide back into a real life.

St. Paul reserved his greatest fury for the Galatians who abandoned the gospel of grace he taught them for an adulterated one which was centered on human efforts. Paul said the self looms so big in our broken lives that it has to die in order for God to bring us back to real life.

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Our guest columnist is the Rev. Patrick Gahan, rector of St. Stephen's Church, Wimberley, Texas. This is the final article in a series of personal reflections on the life of a priest.



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