

Theological Reflection Notes:

God Is... Love

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The Trinity is Relationship – 3 persons one God

The Trinity exists in a relationship of gift giving and receiving in Love

Therefore God is... Love/Good

We enter into the life of the Trinity when we

Enter into relationships of Gift/mutual relationships of Love

This is where Franciscan Theology always begins

Theological Reflection:

- The word “Theological” can seem to be
 - A big word
 - For some it may even be
 - Intimidating
 - No worries,
 - You do not have to be a theologian to do this
 - You don’t need a degree – **I have 4 degrees**
 - It’s not rocket science
 - What does the word Theology mean?
 - The study of God
 - You can do that, right?
 - Francis read 3 books – Creation, Scripture & Life (Inner)
 - Francis was an “Intuitive” Theologian, not academic
 - He gave a theological foundation, a vision, an approach, a direction; to A.H., Bona, Scotus, Peter John Olivi, Roger Bacon
 - You will need to have some knowledge of the stories in scripture
 - To be familiar with the stories of the Gospels
- So what is “Theological Reflection”?

- In the book “Theological Reflection” by Joye Gros, O.P. (Dominican)
 - Don’t worry, I’m going to Franciscan it up just a little
 - Our Dominican brother Gros, states:
 - “Theological Reflection provides the frame work that helps us see the connection between the surface and the depths of life’s meanings. It encourages us to recognize the intimate connection between faith and daily life.”
 - Gros says that;
 - He believes Theological Reflection can help us with some commonly asked questions:
 - We want our lives to have meaning?
 - We want to know how our faith informs our work life?
 - How our family life enhances our spirituality?
 - How can we feel less fragmented and more whole?
 - He uses “Snorkeling” as a euphemism for each chapter of the book
 - 1st Chapter he A snorkeling we go
 - 2nd chapter he gathers his gear
 - 3rd chapter he dives right in...
 - He uses this as a euphemism to say that
 - No matter how beautiful the surface is
 - Looking beneath it reveals a whole new world!
 - I would also say as a Capuchin Franciscan
 - Part of the gear we would want to have with us to go snorkeling is:
 - An understanding of the contemplative
 - And a deep, intimate prayer life
 - I’m going to touch on contemplative prayer today
 - But that is really a whole nother workshop
 - Maybe you have heard people from church say that
 - Religion belongs in church
 - What does it have to do with everyday life?
 - Vat II and CCC talks about out
 - Baptismal call to holiness

- Be very careful here
 - Generally people who strive to become
 - Holy/Saintly
 - Become self-righteous
- You cannot make yourself Holy!
- Only God can make you holy
- Strive to become one with God
 - God will make you Holy
- God is... Love
- A lot of us have a misconception of what it means to be Holy
 - What does it mean to be a saint?
 - Who wants to become a saint/ to be holy???
 - Why?
 - Because we're called to it?
 - Because you want to go to heaven?
 - These all have to do with achievement
 - I go home on Sundays because my mother does my laundry?
 - I need to achieve these things for my personal salvation!
 - There's something missing here
- What does it mean to be Franciscan?
 - Relationship
 - To be in relationship
 - Not out of appropriation or achievement
 - But to be one with God
 - in a mutual relationship of Gift
 - Giving ourselves as gift to each other
 - Receiving each other as gift
 - Not as appropriation for self interest
- "Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, but
 - To the one who gives himself totally to you
 - Give yourself, totally."
 - Appropriate nothing...

- Sound familiar???

Model

- *Experience*
 - What are you experiencing in your life right now, that may need discernment???
 - Something at work?
 - In your family?
 - Your health?
- *Tradition*
 - What we mean by “Tradition” is
 - Scripture
 - Catholic Faith Tradition
 - Which may not be scripturally based
 - Ex; Immaculate Conception
 - Assumption
 - Birth Control
 - Euthanasia – when do you pull the plug?
 - Do we work out of a “Catholic Imagination”?
 - The OFS Rule
 - Do we work out of a “Franciscan Imagination”?
 - I often have Franciscans ask me,
 - Does this go against Catholic teaching?
 - No, the Franciscan approach is very Catholic
 - But, our church is used to a Thomistic approach
 - Intellectual, Deductive
 - The Franciscan approach is more
 - Of the Heart, Inductive, Experiential

- *Culture*
 - What does our culture have to say about
 - Our situation?
 - What does our culture have to say about
 - Our Tradition?
 - Does it agree with us or challenge us?

Method

Attending

- We are listening and processing the dialogue
 - Between our Experience/Tradition/Culture
- Are we even open to dialogue/listening
- David Couturier has a book on the 4 Conversions
 - Personal
 - Inter-personal
 - Ecclesial
 - Structural
- Personal
 - What are our biases
- Inter-personal
 - Are we open to the biases of other people?
 - We don't have to agree with them
 - But can we get our egos out of the way long enough to actually here what they have to say?
- Ecclesial
 - Are we open to what our church/faith has to say
- Structural
 - How has our culture affected us?
 - How are we affecting our culture through our decision?

Asserting

- This is where our transformation happens
 - Theological Reflection calls us to transformation
 - Not necessarily “certitude/Rigidity” in our understanding
- A shift in our understanding
- Gros give the example of Job (pg 19)
- Francis
 - Lord save me for those who want to do me harm, Gave Francis the strength to deal with his father
 - Francis rebuild my church
 - Penance, not about punishment, but about transformation
 - Primacy of Christ
 - Shifting from the belief that Christ came for the sole purpose of saving us from our sins
 - To: God sent Christ into Creation as Gift/a gift of Love, which was always God’s original intent

Decision Making

- This is the moving into Action
- What do we do?
- What do we not do?
- John Shea states:
 - To allow faith perspectives to influence personal and social life.
- Gros goes on to say that:
 - TR is the process of bringing my inner world and my outer world into harmony
 - Building congruence between my beliefs and actions
 - “Walking the talk”
- Why do we as Franciscans
 - Strive to act with moral virtue?
 - To achieve our Salvation?
 - No
 - We act with moral virtue
 - As a response to God’s Love! **(Repeat)**

- Our prayer leads us to Love
- And our Love leads us to Action
- If our Action is not one of Love
 - One of **GIFT**
- Then we need to look at our prayer
- In a Franciscan Moral Vision
 - A Franciscan would never ask
 - “Why do bad things happen to good people?”
 - A Franciscan would ask
 - “How am I being called by God in this situation,
 - To see the **Beauty, Harmony, Goodness, Justice**
 - And how am I going to bring them to light???”
 - Generosity
 - Freedom of Self-Gift
 - To move outward beyond yourself
 - Commitment
 - Praxis (practical action), what it means to
 - Live in the world
 - Respond to real events in the world
 - Respond out of love
 - For a Franciscan, the last step is always one of Action
 - Dignity of creation (Heaccetas – Thisness)
 - The individual dignity of each created being
 - The sacredness of each individual being
 - To respect and allow each individual being
 - The individual dignity it was given by God
 - Human life as a pilgrimage
 - A sacred path
 - A sacred journey of transformation and conversion