**THE GOD I KNOW, Part Two**

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The God I know is Trinity-in-Unity. This God is three divine persons, yet is only one God. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God creates by the Will of the Father, by the Word of the Son, and by the Breath of the Spirit. God saves us and all of creation by the adoption into divine inheritance by the Father, by the self-emptying sacrifice of love by the Son, and by the outpouring of the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit. God sanctifies us or makes us holy (that is, to be like God himself) by the unconditional and gratuitous love of the Father, by the constant abundant mercy of the Son, and by the transformative motivation of the Holy Spirit.

Even more marvelous is the Unity of this Trinitarian God! The God I know is a community of persons in love; and, because of this, is self-diffusive goodness – goodness flowing out of itself and touching everything and everyone. God the Father is the source and the overflowing fountain of all good, the highest good, the fullness of good, without beginning or end, constantly and gratuitously communicating and pouring out this goodness.

The Son, as the Eternal Word Incarnate or the Logos or the complete expression of the Father, is the Father’s perfect representation and image, the divine in bodily form, who totally captures and shares the Father’s infinite goodness in finite ways. Because the love and goodness in the Father and the Son is so powerful, so pervasive, so all-encompassing, they breathe forth together the Spirit who becomes the very alive bond of love and goodness and a person in his own right who facilitates and motivates and fulfils this fountain fullness of goodness and love.

As a community of persons in love, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the exemplar for all interactions, whether among humans or in creation or throughout the universe. As the eternal, never-ending, always-renewing movement of lover (Father), beloved (Son), and the sharing of love (Spirit), the Trinity in Unity is the model of reality, especially for human relationships.

So, even more exciting than God’s being Trinity or Unity is how God touches our lives and interacts with us. The God I know has this limitless, insatiable passion to be love, to experience love, and to share love. So, this God became human –tangible, visible, knowable – through his Son, the Word-made-flesh dwelling among us, out of love (not because of sin) so that we could become co-lovers with God and participants in God’s goodness.

Even before time began, even before anything at all was created, it was God’s purpose, God’s plan, to share his love so that all of creation – particularly human beings – could return that love. Hence, God planned the unfolding of creation to make this plan come to fulfilment. The Incarnation didn’t happen as a remedy for human sinfulness but as the fullness of God’s intention. Jesus Christ, then, is the meaning of all creation, and every creature is made in the image of Christ.

Moreover, for each and every step of the way, the Holy Spirit has been present and active to bring about this plan and to complete it: breathing life into creation, filling the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, activating the ministry of Jesus Christ on earth, descending on the Church to enliven her three-fold purpose (conversion-for-holiness, community-building, Gospel-proclamation), and continuing to inspire and motivate and shape the Body of Christ in time and space.

In addition, because creation is centred and grounded in the Incarnation, every aspect – from the tiniest molecule to the human person – is an outward expression of the Word of God in love, a symbol of the double dynamic of love and goodness (from-God and to-God) working in the world, and the means whereby we make our way toward the community of persons in love which we call heaven or paradise or the Kingdom of God or the fullness of life in God’s presence.

By means of a threefold hierarchy of interactions, we are able to encounter God and respond to God and thereby connect with God and bond with God.

The most diffuse and pervasive is, what St. Bonaventure calls, a “trace” or a “vestige” of the divine. This is the ability of every aspect of all of creation to put forth a sign of God’s presence, person, and power.

The fierce ingenuity of an ant, the beauty of a sunset, the gentle bubbling of a brook, a snoring pine tree whipped by the wind, the tenderness of a little fawn, each has the ability to bring God’s presence to mind, to remind us of God’s majesty, and to cause us to give God praise and thanks. This is the “footprint” of God upon the earth, and this footprint shouts out, *“The heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament proclaims the works of his hands”* (Ps 19:2), for it allows us to see the presence of the Most High (and hence experience God’s love and goodness) even in the simplest things of creation.

The next level is more intense and more focused and always involves the intelligent being, i.e., the human person; this is the “image” of God. The human’s rational and spiritual capabilities allow the human being to image God to others and to call forth from others a response to acknowledge, accept, and acclaim God’s presence and work in the created universe.

Every human is like a “snapshot” of God, manifesting God’s love and goodness, revealing God’s purpose and design, and showing God’s intent for everyone and everything. Every human – regardless of what a person does or regardless of what baggage a person carries – shows something about who God is, what God intends, and how God operates. As an image of God, the human person echoes the words of Jesus Christ, *“Whatever you did to one of these least brothers of mine, you did to me”* (Mt 25:40) for every human is a window into the mind and heart of God and a mirror of the interactive connectedness between the divine and the human.

The highest level of interaction between God and creation is “likeness.” The human person who is “God-conformed” portrays the likeness of God and unfolds more of the reality of God than merely a vestige or an image. Being “God-conformed” has a specific meaning; this is a person who has come to know God (Father, Son, and Spirit) through Sacred Scripture, who has encountered God through the sacraments and through the vestiges and images of life, who has come to imitate God and identify with God within the context of the Church, and who has incorporated God’s values and teachings into one’s own life through prayer and meditation.

This God-conformity or likeness to God is similar to the way one person is like another through an intense, healthy, lasting relationship of love that comes about through matrimony or friendship. This likeness, then, communicates with authenticity and fullness the presence, person, and power of God in love and goodness vis-à-vis all of creation and especially the members of the human family. The First Letter of St. John captures this concept very pointedly: *“No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him”* (4:12,16).

The God I know is very real and very revealing. This God is love and goodness, communicates love and goodness to us, and draws our love and goodness back to complete the circle that begins with the “Godself” of Father, Son, and Spirit. It extends out to envelop all of creation, and unites again with God through the traces, images, and likenesses that all of creation provides by means of the initiative of the Father, through the recapitulation of the Son, and with the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, this is the God I’ve come to know.

*Blest Spark*, June 2016