

Scripture for May 18, 2008

Trinity

Reflection from John Surette, SJ

God takes the initiative

Our first reading this morning from the Book of Exodus begins: “Early in the morning Moses went up Mount Sinai as the Lord had commanded him...”

I call your attention to the fact that it is God who takes the initiative. Moses went up the mountain “as the Lord had commanded him.” God makes the first move.

So often in our spiritual lives we act as if we are taking the initiative. In our prayer, for example, we light a candle in our room or we go into the church building. We try to quiet ourselves, clear our minds, and be aware of God’s

presence. We formulate some words and we speak them to God. In all of this we perceive ourselves as taking the initiative, as making the first move. Then we wait for God to reply to our initiative, to make the second move. And we wait some more...and some more...and some more. Most of the time, however, we do not hear God replying to our prayer, we do not hear God making a response to the dialogue that we think we have initiated.

The problem is that we have reversed the order of things. It is the God within



who initiates. It is the God within who makes the first move. It is the God within who reveals God’s Self to us. It is the God within who first loves us. In this understanding of the way things work, our prayer then becomes our response to God’s Self revelation, our response to

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God loving us, our response to God making the first move.

It shouldn't surprise us that this is the order of things that permeates the Universe. A star in the night sky first floods us with its light. The star makes the first move, the star initiates. You and I are there to receive the light from the star and we respond by saying "Awesome." In giving this response we are making the second move in the encounter between the star and us.

A beautiful flower at this time of the year floods our senses with its color, shape, texture, and fragrance. The flower makes the first move. You and I are there to receive the flower's self-revelation and we respond by saying "How beautiful". In doing this we are making our response to the initiative of the flower, we are making the second move and the encounter between the flower and us is complete.

And the same is true of people. I am aware of your presence in the chapel this morning. I am encountering you because you have first revealed yourself to me. You are radiating light, as everything does. You are taking the initiative. You are making the first move. I perceive the light coming from you and I respond by saying "Hello Mary or Hello Joe". In saying this I am responding to your self-revelation, I am making the second move in our encounter.

There is more going on here. The light radiating from you reveals to me not only your shape, your size, your height, and other external aspects of you but it also reveals to me some aspects of your interiority, your personality, your within, your soul.

So let us stand in a posture of openness, of receptivity, of anticipation before God and before every person and thing. In such a

posture we allow God and that person or thing to take the initiative, to make the first move. In such a posture of openness, receptivity, and anticipation we allow God and that person or thing to wash up on the shores of our souls, flood our consciousness, and reveal themselves to us.

As a result of that revelation we are blessed, we are graced. It is an amazing grace. It is a gift. That gift enables us to make our response, to make the second move. Once we make our response, the encounter with God, with that person or thing, is complete and a deep communion is established!

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