

Living the Spirit More about God

In the past few inserts I have been reflecting with you about our knowledge of Who God is. In this Year of Faith it seems only right that we should come to know more about God. For as the Creed says: We believe in God. Yet, it would be against the purpose of my writing here if we limited that purpose simply to know about God. We should come to actually know Him. This means we seek and attain some degree of relationship – a conscious one – with Him.

I do not write here as a formal theologian would. I have from the start wanted to inspire spiritual growth in my readers. At the same time in reflecting on the meaning of God, I feel compelled to do so with some reference to the theology that has formed my thinking. In this I would like to note two things that theologians use in their study of God. One is an understanding of anthropomorphism. The other is their method called attribution.

Two very big words! Anthropomorphism in our context means that we form mental images of God, ideas that rely on human experience. So Michelangelo painted God the Father as an old man. He followed others in this representation. I believe he did so to show that the Father is ageless. He shows how God is related to Adam, depicted as well, as the giver of life. All human life is a sharing in and derivative of God's life, a reality we express by human images. Jesus certainly used anthropomorphic images when he taught his parables. We have done so by writing about God as "father."

I have relied also in this writing on the process of attribution, by which I mean that when we refer to the operations of God outside Himself, I assign them to one or other of the Persons of the Trinity. So there is the traditional attribution of the Father as Creator, the Son as Redeemer and the Holy Spirit as Sanctifier. But to be exact we must accept that all three Persons of the one Triune God take part in the work of creation, redemption and sanctification. [As an aside, all three operations are still continuing for our benefit.] Our partition or assigned attribution is solely what our human mind does to come to a knowledge of a truth that in reality will always be beyond us.

Now let me turn to some random thoughts about the purpose of my writing about God as Father. How does the knowledge we have achieved through reflection touch on our spiritual life? Here I can speak only for myself. But I am sure that many have the same or similar effects of their acceptance of this faith in God as Father.

For me the heart of the matter is that the study of the Father reveals and emphasizes the love of God for me (and you and all others). God is a loving and dear father, the Abba as Jesus called Him. It also means that I am a true child of God (as are you and all others). My faith and my study tell me that out of love God has shared with me the gift of life.

I also have come to understand, too, how provident the Father is. That is why I can pray as Jesus taught: Give us this day our daily bread. I admit that I often think of this bread as more than ordinary. I also hope to receive from God the Bread of Life.

I see the Father as worthy of obedience. I know from what has been revealed that I am to love Him with everything that I have and all that I am. I have come to know from Revelation – that given especially to Moses and refined by Jesus Himself – that there is a divine plan for human life. It requires of me so many habits of goodness. The commands are, after all is said and done, a call to live with integrity, honesty, and a good relationship with God and all others. So I try to live with the call of this loving Father to accept His Will.

Living the Spirit as faith in God calls us to do is no easy way of life. Honesty demands that we confess that there are failures along the way. Then I reflect on how much the Father has to do with forgiveness. It is He who is called upon by Jesus to forgive humanity its greatest sin, the sin of crucifying its Savior. Can we doubt that the Father heard this prayer?

I believe that this loving Father wants to forgive us our sins. I think of the parable where the father waits so lovingly for the return of the prodigal son. We return to Him with a desire to find forgiveness. Then we realize the grace that forgiveness gives. Our restless hearts find rest in the embrace of a generous God. [As an aside, I must note that theologians use attribution to assign the work of God in forgiving at times to the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit. Yet only one Triune God forgives.]

I have written about Creation. It is a worthy meditation to reflect on just what our faith in a creating God gives to us. Again I speak for myself. My first thought is that I learn from creation's reality that it is from God that I experience the gift of life. I see how much is given to me. My world is inhabited by so much beauty. No doubt I will once again admire this beauty found in Nature. I hope the trees around here show their vibrant autumn colors. And will I not enjoy the gift of October's bright blue weather?

I suggest that our faith in the Father Creator leads us to a realistic appreciation of the environment that surrounds us. We see God working in the passage of time with the changing of the seasons. Space and time no longer are just words to describe distant realities. We can pray for safety from those forces of nature that require our care and carefulness. Does not faith in the Father tell us that every earthly power is but a small reflection of the power of God?

Today there is need to accept the true dignity of every human being, our companions on the journey of life. Here is a passage that I want to share: "How undeniably the God revealed in Jesus is The Father, for whom our hearts are made, and in whom alone they are at rest. With all due gratitude to our earthly origins, yet in Christ we are indeed children 'born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God.'" So we pray to the Father: "We praise You, we bless You, we adore You, we give You thanks for Your great glory, O God, Almighty Father."

*God bless and love you always
Monsignor David Morrison*

September 29, 2013