

Twenty-Sixth Week of Ordinary Time
September 29, 2024
Year of the Most Holy Eucharist
Reflection #40

“God stands before God in the attitude that is fitting for God.” (Adrienne von Speyr, Confession, p.21)

In our reflection on preparing oneself to receive, in a worthy manner, the Eucharist, we began our discussion on how the Sacrament of Reconciliation assists us in this vital task. Refreshing your memory, I spoke concerning Confession being something quite natural for everyone. We have a desire to speak with others, often asking for their wisdom, guidance or assistance with complex and important issues with which we struggle. In our attempt to remedy our situation, we might find we have isolated ourselves by seeking only the advice of those who agree with us and negating others who could challenge our viewpoint or our actions. This weekend, I would like to proceed further by stating that Confession is not only natural; it is Godly; it is an expression of the love shared within the Trinity.

I am going to guess that none present ever considered Confession as an expression of the Trinity. Honestly, I have never considered this concept either until reading from Adrienne von Speyr’s book entitled Confession. Allow me to offer her idea to you using both my own words and examples. I hope this idea will give you pause when speaking of this amazing Sacrament.

We will begin “In the beginning” with the Book of Genesis. We read in Genesis 1:26 this statement of God: *“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . .’”* One might wonder to whom God was speaking with when He used the word “Us.” Most believe this to be a reference to the presence of the Trinity. Because we, as Christians, accept that God has revealed Himself to be a Trinity of Divine Persons (Father, Son, Spirit), we can now offer thoughts on the mutual love which is shared between these Persons. We believe that the Father sees Himself fully revealed in the Son and Spirit. They likewise see themselves fully revealed in the Father. As von Speyr would write: *“In this fashion God stands before Himself in the attitude of God, in an attitude perpetually corresponding to and emerging from the perpetual present moment of eternity, in an attitude of trust, of gratitude, of surrender and of acceptance.”* (p.21)

I admit, I had to think about her statement for some time. If one were to examine this idea through the prism of the love shared between husband and wife, then I think it makes complete sense. Let us state what we know: (1) God is a Trinity of Divine Persons, (2) Each Person loves the other fully and shares Himself completely with the other Persons, (3) We are created in His image and likeness, (4) We should also have this ability to love and share ourselves with another and (5) This other is found only in Marriage. Now how can we prove this? We know for a marriage to function, both parties MUST share of themselves to the other. A husband must share himself with his wife and vice versa. A marriage cannot function if this does not take place. It is in the act of sharing with the other that mutual love is fostered, grows and flourishes. The more husband and wife share of themselves with the other, the more their love can deepen. In using the term “sharing,” I am not solely referring to favorite songs, books or movies. I mean as much of themselves as they potentially know and understand. (We only partially know ourselves and creation through the use of natural reason, therefore, we can never fully share ourselves with others.) As we stated, God the Father perfectly and completely shares of Himself with God the Son.

This holds, likewise, with God to Son to God the Father. We profess this complete and perfect love to be itself a Divine Person in the Spirit. Husband and wife imitate this love when they come together to form life. Now, how does this apply to Confession?

In Confession, we share ourselves with God. We reveal to Him our innermost weaknesses. We, to paraphrase another's statement, stand before Him fully exposed. This is an act of trust, of love. In the confessional, we imitate the Son before the Father fully exposed bearing within Himself the burden of our sins. The Son is before the Father disfigured by the consequences of man's sinfulness. He has obediently accepted this as the ultimate act of love to make amends for man's rejection of God's love first offered in creation, as told through the Book of Genesis. We join the Son's Divine Action of Love when we go into a confessional. And how does the Father react to us? He sees in our action, the Divine Action of His Son. And He loves and forgives us. As the Son bore the weight of man's sins as He hung upon the cross, so too, do we bear the weight of our own shame and sin when we enter the confessional. God the Father loved His Son as He hung upon the cross. So does He love seeing His Son, Himself in our actions when we, obedient to His call of love, offer ourselves before Him asking for forgiveness. And what does He do? He forgives us through His ambassador, our priest.