

May 11, 2020

Cardinal Cupich and Bishop McClory both introduced the pious practice of “spiritual communion” into their streamed Sunday Masses as I am sure others have and I have no problem with people who find that pious practice consoling and efficacious but I want to suggest that there are other ways to look at and understand our inability to be present to one another and join the procession to receive Holy Communion.

The Jesus of John’s Gospel introduces a series of metaphors that he uses to try and move the consciousness of his disciples into new ways of thinking, very explicit teachings by Jesus found only in John and not Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

John’s Jesus talks about shepherds and sheep, vines and branches, many dwelling places in the Father’s house, and in a series of Last Supper “talks” moves into language that is extremely intimate, almost erotically physical, images about being in the Father and the Father in him and us, his disciples, in them. I quote from John 17: 15 ff. \*

“I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one.

They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth.

Your word is truth.

As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth.

I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.

And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.

Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am-they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

Granted, that is not easy teaching, in part because our world is far removed from sheep and vines and intimate language in literature, but remember that Jesus was not trying to create a religious elite or a caste system religion, he intended us to all be on the same playing field and be able to access his teachings by changing our ordinary or inherited ways of thinking, especially about God and the ways of God, to his way of thinking. I believe that Jesus was far more concerned with how we think than how we act.

Additionally, only we from our side in the relationship could block or terminate the outpouring of Love, Spirit, and Mercy that came from the Trinity.

I am no one special but I have over the years learned from all kinds of wonderful people to be able when I put my mind to it, to be intimately caught up in a mystery that is beyond my understanding but not beyond my experience.

Sometimes down through the ages that has happened to me during the celebration of the Liturgy but more often in unexpected times and in expected places when my consciousness simply rests assured in the mystery of the Holy Trinity in which I am caught up and live always.

When I am doing the homily at funerals and I catch the eye of a grandchild, spouse, or parent of the newly dead person, there is a pretty consistent and reliable experience that I return to of being caught up in Love beyond any explanation with words.

When I am with some friends driving or eating or seeing a play or movie and silence descends, there is no sense of awkwardness, just a peace that settles in my consciousness that this moment in time also lives out of time.

Sometimes, when young couples come and ask me to marry them and I ask them tell me how you got engaged, silence and tears enter the room and a marvelous story is about to unfold, not marvelous to anyone else but that young couple and the verge of a commitment to follow love into mystery. The silence is a Holy Silence, the tears Holy Tears because the Mystery of the Trinity is taking flesh in the here and now.

And babies, babies are always the most recent to bring the indwelling Trinity to the flesh and blood of the here and now.

You have all had those experiences in your lives, in these days of silence and required stillness, dwell in those moments, do not let your anger get the best of you, try not to make this whole thing an argument of politics but an opportunity to repent your mind by pulling the indwelling Trinity out of your memories and hearts.