

Encountering the Son

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In trying to explain my sense of the Trinity in my ministry I talk about:

God beyond -The Father

God beside -The Son

God within - The Spirit

In my sense of God beside me, the scriptures have helped me in my understanding.

In Matthew 11:28-30 we hear 'Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me'. This passage came alive for me when it was explained that in the time of Jesus, if you had a young ox who had yet to plough the land, you yoked it with an older more experienced ox, so that the young ox could learn from the old ox walking side by side. So, when Jesus invites us to shoulder his yoke and learn, he seeks to be side by side with us. Not in front or behind, or above or below, but at my side. So, Jesus is my companion at my side.

John's Gospel has also been a source of inspiration. There is little talk of disciples, in this Gospel. Jesus talks of friends. Think of the friendships that have been so important, that is our model of being side by side with Jesus. My companionship with Jesus is inspired by the roles we share with him at our baptism of Priest, Prophet, King. This is a framework for my companionship:

Priest - Jesus is the ultimate mediator between the divine and the human, between heaven and earth. We too can be mediators. Our engagement with others can be a bridgepoint between the divine and the human. We too can be living embodied sacraments to each other; we can, despite our flaws, be outward signs of inward grace.

King - Jesus shares in the fullness of power of God. We too can share in the power, a gift to share so that our world can be transformed. I believe in the power of love, a love that heals, forgives, offers hope and transforms broken lives and a broken world. I also believe in the love of power. Not a power that controls, dominates, abuses and wounds others or our planet. But I do believe in a power that seeks uphold the dignity and value of everyone including the unborn child, a power that seeks the common good, a power that want all people to reach their God-given potential, a power that seeks to heal the wounds of our broken planet.

Prophet - Jesus as prophet challenged but he also offered hope. In his understanding of the Kingdom of God embodied in his death and resurrection, we have the vision of the Light overcoming the darkness of sin and death. Jesus is the embodiment of love and hope, both are essential. Hope without love can dehumanise. Love without hope can fade like the morning mist. Many beliefs and value systems with talk of love, but I believe it is Jesus' integration of what I call 'embodied hope and love' is what we as 'friends of Jesus' distinguishes us from others.

The perfect expression of this integration of hope and love is revealed in the Passion Narratives. When I have been using my imagination with the Passion stories as part of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius, I have started the journey with dread, fearing that the barbaric pain and suffering Jesus experienced with overwhelm me. But my experience has been very different. The main revelation has been the discovery that Jesus is in total communion with the Father, in being weaved through and totally enfolded by the love of the Father, it gives him a ground to be totally rooted in. Like those trees that have survived these ferocious storms of recent weeks, the storm of his barbaric death and rejection does not uproot him. His union with the love of Father enables him to come through this storm. Jesus is my companion, with him at my side, I am always learning from this 'embodied love and hope'.