



# Theology Corner

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*Theological Reflections by Paul Chutikorn - Director of Faith Formation*

## “What does the Trinity mean for us?”

In the previous weeks, I have covered the idea that God is a Trinity *before* the act of creation. This was an important note because it is easy to fall into the error of thinking that God is three persons based only on what he *does* rather than what he *is*. But with that being said, this does not mean that his three-ness is hidden from us in what he does. In fact, it is quite the opposite! God chooses to reveal himself according to who he is. In other words, since the very life of God is to be a Trinity of Persons, he shows himself to us and acts in that pattern.

We can see this pattern in the divine plan of salvation as he continues to communicate truth to the world. God the Father *sends* the Son into the world. This sending of the Son can sometimes carry with it the implication that the Son is inferior to the Father, but this is not true at all. This is not a command from the Father. In this sense, being sent means for God to exist in a *new* way in the world – the new way we are speaking of here is to exist as a *man*. Some may ask, “why can’t we say that the Father is sent?” The reason for this is because to be sent is indicative of coming *from* something, and as we have come to learn in the past few weeks, we cannot say that the Father is ‘from’ anything since he is the principle of the divine processions. In Trinitarian theology, the notion of *innascibility* (unbegottenness) is proper to the Father. Recall also the pattern that we are looking for in this plan of salvation – what pattern do we see here? We first see that within the life of God, the Son proceeds from the Father as Word. The Father eternally speaks the Son into existence as perfect knowledge of himself. Now in a similar way, we can understand the Father as sending the Son in a new way of existence, revealing the Father to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. We see this concept being shown to Philip by Christ himself, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9). So, just as the Second Person of the Trinity exists as an image of the Father in his own life, so too does the Son come into the world and reveal himself as the “visible image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15).

This trinitarian pattern of the Son does not stop here. It continues in the order of grace as we receive the gift of faith. In baptism, when we receive what we might call the seed of the theological virtues, the gift of faith which gives us a knowledge of God is patterned after the Son. How? Well, just as the Son came into the world to show the divine image through Jesus Christ, so too is it the case that the Person of the Son serves as the principle of knowledge of God within our soul by grace. That is to say, the indwelling of the Son is made present as we receive faith from God as a gift.

This brings about another question. What about love? Remember in the previous articles where it was said that the Holy Spirit is love in Person? The Holy Spirit exists as the love between the Father and the Son. Just as the Son is the principle of faith, the Holy Spirit is the principle of charity in the order of grace! It is the reception of the gift of the Holy Spirit that allows us to commune with the entire Trinity in love. While the effects of baptism involve the work of the whole Trinity, we often see images of the Holy Spirit in reference to baptism. Why? Because in baptism, as we die to our old selves and rise to a newness of life, this grace restores us into a *friendship* with God. The principle of friendship with God is charity as he reaches out to us in love while we reach back in a reciprocal act of love and allow him to work through us and sanctify us by his Spirit of love.

As you can see, the entire Trinity indwells in us by grace, but each Person plays a part, so to speak, according to their individual missions. But even though these missions are proper to a particular Person, the actions themselves are common to all Persons since they flow from one divine nature. It is in this sense that all the Persons of the Trinity co-indwell with each other through their *perichoresis* or mutual indwelling. What an amazing grace that our God chose to reveal his otherwise hidden nature to us as he seeks to enter into relationship with all of his adopted children so that we may one day see him face to face in eternal beatitude.